

This is the 2,000th No. 32 Pages. One Penny.

# THE LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED].

No. 2000.—VOL. LXXVII. With Supplement.] FOR THE WEEK ENDING AUGUST 31, 1901.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



"MY FATHER PLACED ME AT RAMNEE CONVENT WHEN I WAS TWO YEARS OLD, AND I HAVE NEVER SEEN OR HEARD FROM HIM," SAID SYLVIA.

## WITHOUT A REFERENCE.

By the Author of "Diana's Diamonds," "The Gardener's Daughter," &c.

### CHAPTER I.

**Q**NE very wet August afternoon, about twenty-four years ago, a small procession might have been seen winding its way up the steep, narrow road that leads to the Convent of Our Lady, at Ramnee Bhim Tal, North-West Province of India.

The rain was coming down like a water-spout; the small mountain torrents were brown, rushing rivers, boiling over with

dirty white foam; the celebrated lake, on the right hand, was indistinguishable in a grey mist; and the low country, which lay there below, on the left hand, was entirely lost to sight.

It was not a promising day, and nothing but the most urgent private affairs would summon any sane person from beneath the noisy shelter of their zinc roof.

The little party who were making their way up the Ramnee were, first, a man in a waterproof and dripping solar topee, riding

a stout hill pony. He was about thirty-five years of age, short and squarely built, with a ruddy complexion, keen, beady black eyes, a small moustache, and a very square chin.

He seemed to be buried in his reflections, and totally indifferent to the condition of the weather, and the miniature cataract that was streaming down his hat.

Behind him came a stout hill man, carrying a large box on his head, and he was followed by a "dandy"—a sort of a chair-borne by four coolies. In this dandy sat a shivering ayah, with great gold ornaments in her ears, holding an umbrella over herself, and a very pretty little girl, with curly brown hair, and dark grey eyes—a child of about two years of age. She was

**A Complete Novel is given away with this No.**

very tired and sleepy, and could scarcely keep awake, for she had come a long way since morning—forty miles from the railway at the foot of the hills.

Soon the high white walls of the convent came in view. The travellers passed inside the gates, up a long avenue, and halted before the largest of several fine buildings.

In a few minutes the gentleman, ayah, and child were ushered into the Reverend Mother's parlour.

She evidently expected them, as she came forward, and said, with a strong German accent,—

"Och! what a day! The poor child, she must be drowned. I never thought you would come in such weather."

"Well, we did; we are not sugar and salt," said her visitor, with an air of *bonhomie*, wiping his face, as he spoke, in a large red silk handkerchief. "Time is an object, and I don't want to miss my steamer. We have agreed about the terms. Have we not, ma'am?"

"Yes," assented the Lady Superior, "the terms are our own. She is motherless?"

"Yes, she has no mother," he answered, rather brusquely.

"Your only child—you say."

"Yes, and I am glad of it."

"Shall you leave her with us for any time?"

"That is just what I want to arrange with you," persuasively. "I am a busy man. I have no ties at home, no one who would take this child. She will be well looked after, and educated here, with you, and, I shall possibly leave her in your care till she is quite grown up. The climate is first-rate, and the advantages are many, and the drawback next to none."

"You will come and see her?" inquired the Lady, after a pause.

"Yes. I'll run up when possible; but I shall not be in these parts for the next three years."

"And we have all the responsibility during that time?"

"Yes. You have heard from my agents in Calcutta, and payment will be made punctually and quarterly. I think that is about all that I can call to mind at this moment."

"You have not told me her name yet," looking at the child as she lay asleep on the ayah's lap.

"Sylvia. She is two years old."

"And what religion is she to be brought up in?"

Her companion hesitated for a moment, and then said,—

"Roman Catholic."

"And, I suppose, when she grows a little older, she may learn music, French, drawing, like other girls?"

"Yes, if you like, as long as there are no extras. The offer I make is to cover all, and also to buy her clothes. It's liberal enough—is it not?" he demanded, sharply.

"Yes; we shall have nothing to complain of," returned the Lady Superior, looking at him steadily.

Somehow, although he was by no means ill-looking, and had a broad forehead, and glossy, close cut, brown hair, she could not take to him.

He did not seem to care a straw about his pretty little girl. She might have been a bale of goods for all the feeling he displayed, and he was not to see her for years—and she was motherless.

"I must be going," he said, rising hastily. "I want to catch the tonga going back. Her clothes are in a box; the ayah has been paid a month's wages."

And as he stood up to depart he seemed like a man who has a load off his mind, and was relieved.

"You will write, I suppose?" inquired the Reverend Mother.

"Yes, if necessary. All communications for me you will please forward to Lamb and Skinner, Kyd-street, Calcutta." He moved towards the child, and then said, "Ah! it's a pity to wake her."

But the ayah was not so scrupulous, and said in her shrill voice,—

"Mussy babe—wake—papa going—wake—wake!"

The child opened her lovely sleepy eyes, and gazed for a second into the ruddy face so close to hers. Then, as he offered to kiss her, turned hastily away, with a palpable disgust, and buried her head in the ayah's fat shoulder and began to scream.

"Well, never mind, never mind. She's not half awake, and she is cross," said her father, indulgently; and after a few moments conversation, and declining a cup of coffee or any refreshment, he hurried out, and threw himself on the pony, and set off at a break-neck pace for the nearest hotel.

"Now, ayah," said the Lady Superior, "you had better give the child her supper, and I will show you her room," and she rang the bell, and a tall, pretty Sister came in immediately.

"Sister Mary Joseph, here is this little creature. Will you see that she has her bread and milk and that she is made comfortable in the end dormitory? Poor child! she is half dead with sleep and fatigue."

"How pretty!" exclaimed the Sister. "What lovely eyes! Come to me, darling," holding out her arms. "What is her name?" to the ayah.

"She says her name is Effie. The sahib calls her Sylvia."

"How Strange. Sylvia what?"

"Sylvia Paske," rejoined the Reverend Mother. "She is likely to be under our care for years. There is the bell going for vespers. Take her away at once."

Sister Mary Joseph—an Irish nun—was devoted to children, and holding out her arms once more was pleased to see that her invitation was accepted.

"Sylvia is a good girl," she said smothering her with kisses. "Sylvia will come with me and go 'bye-o.'"

"Me no Sylvia—that naughty name—me Effie."

"Well, Effie, you will be my little girl, wont you, my little Effie?"

"No, no, no," peevishly. "Me mammy's little Effie, mammy's little Effie," she repeated, dreamily, and still repeating it she dropped her head on her breast and "went off," as the nurses say, fast asleep.

"Mr. Paske must be a queer sort of a man," thought the nun, as she tucked the child into her little white cot, "not to know the name of his own daughter."

## CHAPTER II.

FIFTEEN years have elapsed since we saw Sylvia Paske being carried down a long corridor in Sister-Mary Joseph's arms. The world has gone on. There have been wars—great wars and peace—deaths and births and marriages; but the current of Sylvia's life remains hemmed in by the convent walls of Ramnee, and her existence is as monotonous as that of the schoolroom hour-glass.

From the lisping, curly-haired pet of the establishment, the apple of Sister Mary Joseph's eye, she had grown to be a delicate-looking, clever girl, in the lower school, with a great talent for music, and an exquisite voice. She had also a wonderful knack with her needle. She talked French and German fluently, and was one of the most, if not the most, accomplished pupil in the whole convent.

Pretty, a slight, and distinguished-looking as she passed into her teens, the Reverend Mother looked in vain for the smallest resemblance between her and the parent who had left her with her so many years previously, and who had never once returned to see her.

In spite of her being a general favourite poor "Silve," as she was called, was desperately lonely.

When the other girls went home from December to February, and Bhim Tal was almost deserted and given over to the panthers and the snow, she still remained on year after year to pace the empty classrooms, the empty garden, and to wonder how it was that no one ever sent to claim her.

She wrote dutifully to her father four times a-year to an address in Calcutta. She related the small round of convent life, the extent of her accomplishments, and the state of the weather. She sent smoking caps and slippers with constant regularity, but never received any kind of reply.

Still the nuns insisted that she should continue to persevere. It was her filial duty; and her father, although he had apparently settled down in England, never to return, communicated through his agents that he was aware of his daughter's existence, and paid his accounts with the most praiseworthy regularity.

Once he wrote and stated that the condition of his health would preclude his return to the East. The doctors told him that further residence in the East would be suicidal. He was glad to hear that his daughter was so healthy and so happy.

But was she happy? Far from it. She had a strong will, a strong brain, and an indomitable spirit. It was not enough for her to be the favourite, the beauty of boarders, to receive rapturous applause at the one yearly event, open to the public, and patronised by the Lieutenant-Governor and Staff—the great concert. She wanted something more than this. She wanted to know her proper place in life, and to see the world. Many a time had she coaxed and kissed Sister Mary Joseph to tell her all she knew; but Sister Mary Joseph had not much to repeat, and was in great awe of the Reverend Mother, who gained increasing austerity, as she advanced in years, and had a rooted dislike to what she called "gossip."

Sylvia discovered to her delight that Sister Therese, who was French, was not so reserved; and as they walked up and down the garden in the holidays, moving rapidly to keep themselves warm, she prevailed on her to repeat the episode of the wet day when, as a tiny child, she had been brought to Ramnee.

Sister Therese had seen Mr. Paske, and described him as a short, strongly built, active-looking man, with very small, piercing black eyes, and rather brusque manners. She had opened the door on his arrival.

"And you can tell me nothing of my mother?"

"Nothing, except that when you first came you were always saying 'you were mammy's little Effie!'"

"Effie!" she echoed, in amazement.

"Yes, you would have your name was Effie."

"And what about the ayah? What became of her?"

"She stayed a week to help you to get used to us, and us to you. She said she had been engaged at an hotel in Lucknow, merely for the journey, and could not tell us anything more about you than what we knew ourselves."

"Sister Therese," said Sylvia, halting suddenly before her, and transfixing her with her eyes, "don't you think that it is



very odd, that I am left here year after year, and no one comes to see me, or ask for me from Christmas to Christmas?"

"At any rate, you are paid for most punctually, *ma chère*. I wish (Sister Therese kept the books, and made out the bills) that everyone paid as regularly."

"And who sends the money?" she continued, in anxious catechism.

"A firm in Calcutta. Lamb and Skinner, High-street."

"And not one line from them?"

"No, merely asking for a receipt!"

"My father must have some reason for keeping me here a prisoner!" she exclaimed, passionately.

"Sylvia!"

"And am I not? Do I ever go outside the gates more than three or four times a year? Do I know anything of the world or life? Am I free to please myself?"

"What a way you speak, child! Life, indeed! It is not *comme il faut* for a young girl; and as to the world, it is a very bad place. You are ten times happier and safer here. Of that you may be perfectly certain."

"If I were like Leonie Smidt and Annie Brown, stolid, giggling, hearty girls, who like their dinner and could live on sweets, and are happy with a new hat, it would be different. I am not like them in appearance, am I?"

Sister Therese looked at the slight, tall, fairy creature before her, with her clear cut delicate features and aristocratic air. No, as well compare a cart horse to a racer.

"No, I am not. I see it in your face. Well, my mind is just as different. It does not run in the same groove as theirs. I want to find out why my father disowns me!"

"Better not," said the nun, shaking her head.

"But I shall," returned the girl, with a note of passion in her voice.

"How can you?"

"I do not know just at present, I cannot give you an answer on the spot, but you say I am clever. I am good at mathematics. I can think, and I can plan. If the worst comes to the worst, the convent has given me the power of earning my bread."

"*Ma chère*, you need never do that."

"I may need to. I cannot draw a stroke, and I should hate teaching, but I can sing, and play the piano, nearly as well as Sister Cecilia; and, if I did not succeed in that, you know I have useful fingers that can copy anything. I shall be a milliner—or I will go upon the stage!"

"Grand Dieu!" ejaculated the nun, piously. Was she walking in Ramnee garden beneath the very convent windows and listening to such profane talk! She glanced up at the bare branches of the gat trees, the towering, snow-clad hills, yet she was not dreaming. She was wide awake, and very much shocked.

Sylvia had always been different to others—so spiritual, so eager to learn; so free from all petty deceits, so self-willed. Yes, the Reverend Mother had tried conclusions, and Sylvia's will was the strongest. She had been told to share a room with the two girls she disliked, and had flatly refused, and until she gave in she had been ordered to sleep in the grand corridor. She never gave in, and slept there on the hard boards for two months, till at last the Reverend Mother sent for her in despair.

"Why was she so wicked? Why did she grieve her friends?"

"She was not wicked—at least not as wicked as Blanche and Charlotte," was her bold reply.

"What did they do?" demanded the Superior, imperiously.

Silence. She was not going to tell that they smuggled in forbidden books, and sweets, and notes, and that they were a vulgar, coarse deceitful pair.

The Reverend Mother could make nothing of Sylvia. She was unable to frighten her with floods of tears, by a word or a look, like other pupils. This girl with the square jaw, firm mouth, and steady eyes, had the heart and spirit of a lion. One day not long after her walk with Sister Therese, she was sent for to the parlour. The Reverend Mother had spectacles on, and a letter in her hand.

"Sylvia," she said. "Here is a letter from your father."

"From home?" inquired the girl, eagerly.

"No; forwarded by his agents, Lamb and Skinner, Calcutta. He hopes you are well." She paused, but Sylvia stood as white and as still as a statue, expecting that the next sentence would convey her release. Alas, no!

"He is most anxious to know if you have a vocation."

"I—a vocation?" she stammered, in amazement.

"Yes, as he particularly desires you to become a cloistered nun, and take the veil."

"I never will, madame—never!" Sylvia answered forcibly.

"No. Yours is a restless and untamed spirit. For a girl of eighteen your views of life—such as they are—are deplorably mistaken."

"If I do not take the veil is there any alternative?"

"Yes; but he seems to think it almost superficial to mention it. He says 'After sixteen years of Ramnee Convent, among holy surroundings and holy women, with no knowledge of the outer world—and possibly no desire to see it, for what the eye does not know the heart does not pine for—it is almost certain that conventual life will have become her second nature, and that she will cast in her lot with your Sisterhood, and take the vows of a novice at once, and eventually the black veil I shall give her a handsome dowry—three thousand pounds paid down—and I shall feel truly happy in knowing that she has secured for herself a life of repose, and a future in paradise.'"

Sylvia listened with quivering nostrils, and said nothing.

"My dear child," said the Superior, "I am a just woman, and I will not attempt to influence you, but I am fond of you in a way, and—I wish you could be my spiritual daughter. And then think of all your dowry would do for the chapel. We could get the bells and belfry!"

"Some day, *ma mère*, I may be able to give them to you. If ever I am possessed of money you shall have them, as—" She hesitated and stopped.

"As what?"

Sylvia, who was about to say "a thank-offering," quickly exchanged it to, "an offering to the community with whom I have spent so many years."

"But where will you get money?" inquired the other.

"I do not know. I have a presentiment that I shall be rich some day, and then I shall set the bells ringing in Ramnee and now *ma mère*, the alternative?"

"Is this. When you are eighteen you are to leave us, unless you remain altogether, and you are to reside with an elderly couple in Shirani, a hill station about forty miles from this. The agents will make all arrangements when you are eighteen."

"I shall be eighteen next week," said Sylvia, in a low, abrupt voice.

"Marry! as soon!" with a start. "Well, at any rate, we cannot possibly spare you till after the great concert. We might as well have none if you were obliged to go away. You sing two solos, don't you, and in all the part songs?"

"Yes; and I play the guitar and piano too, and accompany most of the songs."

"You will be a loss in every way, and a musical loss," she sighed. "And now, dear, you may go. I may write to the agents, and say that your vocation is not for the religious life—I would that it were so. You had better reflect."

"No need. I have reflected. My mind is made up. Madam, please make them understand that quite distinctly;" and then as she closed the door very gently, she said to herself, "A vocation for a religious life—no. If I have a vocation for anything, it is for the stage!"

### CHAPTER III.

SISTER THERESE'S conversation, and this letter from her father, gave Sylvia much to think of.

She rose early and paced the long avenue, with eyes bent on the ground, her hands clasped behind her.

She had made a note of Lamb and Skinner's address; she had noted that her original name was Effie, that her father was said to be a dark, ruddy-faced, somewhat dapper man, with brusque manners; and she had brought home to her mind the fact that, after neglecting her steadily for sixteen years, he was now undeniably anxious to bury her alive, and get rid of her!

If she had been like Lottie Grey she would have acquiesced. Lottie was a good girl, and the glories of her heavenly bridal, and the amount of her fortune, would have been very tempting to her, but for herself, no—never. She must have some wild blood in her veins; and she was like a thoroughbred dog—once she took hold of an idea (not of another dog) she never let go. The idea was carried out and accomplished.

Her main idea now was to consider who she was, and why she was hidden away in a convent in Northern India whilst her father lived and flourished at home.

Once with this worthy couple at Shirani she would have a free hand; she would be able to come and go, to write, to speak, without constant supervision.

Already her heart beat fast at the thought of the change, and she was longing for the concert to be over.

As to leaving the convent, she would come back and see them all—come back frequently.

Were they not her only friends? But to stay—never! To remain and spend her young life among those grey walls, to live there—maybe for fifty years—the very idea made her blood run cold.

The practising that went forward for weeks and days on pianos of various ages, and by performers to match, was absolutely deafening; but it came to an end at last. The printed invitations were out, and the rooms were decorated. The long class-room was turned into a concert hall, with rows of forms across it. A sort of stage was erected for the pianos and performers. The walls were covered with wreaths and ferns, and the girls all got out their very best dresses, and had a pair of new white gloves apiece.

The great afternoon came. Sister Sophy stood in the hall to receive visitors; sister Mary showed them their seats.

There were arm-chairs at the upper end for the party from Government House and the Reverend Mother, who was as pleasant and agreeable to all her guests as if she were a finished woman of the world.

The first was a piece, played simultaneously on four pianos by eight girls, and noisily lifted the roof of the room. Then came a duet—a rather feeble performance, for Letty Smith was almost crying with fright; then a part song, sung by seven or eight girls, who looked precisely what they were—common; the stout, well-fed daughters of parents on the plains, with plenty of mixed blood in their veins, but not an ounce of breeding about them.

After they had been applauded and had escaped, there was the usual pause; the audience talked and nodded to friends, and fluttered their programmes, and said it was getting rather hot.

Suddenly there was a startling silence; people ceased to talk and yawn and rattle papers and fans. Who was this divine creature that was now standing before them, all dressed in white, with a roll of music in her hand? She was slight and dark and young, and held herself like a princess.

She raised her eyes—beautiful, dark eyes—and looked right into the crowd without shame or bashfulness, still less, the smallest tinge of boldness.

She was self-possessed, yet not self-conscious. She was a lady. How in the name of all that was pure came this beautiful girl to be at Ramnee Convent, among scores of tradespeople's children and half-castes?

They looked at the programme eagerly. There was written,—

"Song—serenade, by Joubert, Miss Sylvia Paske."

In another moment a voice—the proper supplement to such a face—was swelling through the room, and astonishing and charming its hearers—a rich, sweet, and pure mezzo-soprano.

Miss Paske was not at all nervous, and bowed her grateful acknowledgments amidst frantic applause.

She was encored and re encored. The previously bored audience would have kept her on the stage all the evening; but this could not be. The Reverend Mother warmly accepted compliments as her due with placid dignity, but all enquiries were politely baffled, until an elderly gentleman came to her in the interval, and said,—

"Who would have thought of seeing Paske's daughter here? I remember her a baby. I knew her father and mother up in Tirhoot. She's the living image of her mother, and yet she has a look of Paske too. What a handsome girl she is!"

After the concert was over, many people would have liked to have been introduced to the convent *prima donna*; but the only person who was so far favoured, was a bald, stout, elderly man in spectacles—Colonel Kane, of the Bengal Staff Corps.

"I knew your father and mother well, years and years ago," he said. "Who would have thought of seeing you here. Are they up here?"

"No; my mother is dead. I do not remember her; and my father lives at home," returned the girl, in a low voice.

"Indeed; he and I were great friends once. I am an old bachelor, and I don't suppose you would be allowed to come and stay with me—eh!—would you?"

The Reverend Mother raised her hands—very pretty ones—in pious horror.

"Or to spend a day—just one little day—with an old man!"

She shook her head very decidedly.

"Well, at least you will allow me to come and take her for a walk—no harm in that—along some of the quiet roads at the back of your hill? Now, if you don't, Madame Muller, I shall give out that you are too strict—that you are a very dragon!"

Madame laughed. She knew she was strict. She gloried in her reputation.

"I have so much to say to her I cannot say here," he added, jestingly. "I want to talk to her of old times, and the days when she was in short petticoats, and sat on my knee and kissed me. She may walk down the avenue with me now?"

She might, and Sylvia accompanied, with a beating heart, this much-envied, elderly gentleman.

"And so your father lives at home altogether?"

"Yes," colouring as she replied.

"When did you see him last?"

"Sixteen years ago;" and her face contracted with pain.

"What!" stopping suddenly. "Bless my heart, sixteen years!"

"It is true. Perhaps you who knew him so well can tell me why he dislikes me. He never has written to me once. I have never been away from the convent, and he now wants me to take the veil."

"Good heavens! My dear young lady, are we speaking of the same person? It is impossible, impossible!"

"You know best," said the girl, in a constrained voice.

"We must be, for you are the image of your mother. Your father idolised you. He was absolutely silly about you, and he belonged to the Church of England. I am completely at sea!"

"What was he like?"

"Dark, good-looking, and not very tall. Such a cheery fellow. Ah! how one drifts away from old friends!"

"And my mother?"

"Like you. She was a Bellairs, one of the beautiful Bellairs'. Hem! I have paid you a compliment, and I did not mean to, and what would the Mother Superior say?"

"Thank you, it is the first I have ever had. Tell me since then, please," clasping her hands passionately together. "Where did you meet them?"

"He was a tea-planter, and I was on detachment in a wild part of Assam. We were almost the only Europeans, and we fraternised. We shot, we played cards and chess. We called one another Bob and George. You know his name was really Goddington?"

"No, I never knew that. I really know nothing about him."

"Ah! then I see I have much to tell you. But what you have told me surprises me beyond bounds. He used not to be that sort of chap. What can have changed him?"

"There—there is the bell!" she said, with a frightened start, "and I must go. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, my dear! I'll call on Thursday at four. Mind you are ready," and he shook her warmly by the hand.

Sylvia flew back as if walking on air. Here was the solution of all the mystery. Colonel Kane would tell her everything. He had said so. He would advise her. He would be her friend, her confidante. He had a nice face, and she could talk to him quite freely.

But when Thursday came, alas! no Colonel appeared. She was dressed and ready at three o'clock.

She stood watching down the hill till after six—in vain, in vain; and then she went back to the dormitory, and cried with sheer disappointment.

She did not know till a week later that on Thursday morning Colonel Kane, who was abnormally stout, had been found dead in his bed—the bursting of an artery on the brain was the doctor's verdict.

He was deeply regretted by all his old friends, but by none more than his new acquaintance—the girl at the convent—for she felt that her only link with the past, her

only hope for the future, had vanished with his last breath.

## CHAPTER IV.

The partings and the packing at the convent took place.

It was the first time in her life that Sylvia had been called upon to put up her belongings, and they had accumulated considerably in sixteen years.

The old teak wood box which had brought her small, infant wardrobe to Ramnee was hunted out. It would do to hold her lesson books and music.

As she opened it, to give it a dusting inside, she caught sight of a small scrap of paper that looked like a piece of a letter, that had been torn off in order to wrap up some small article.

The writing was as distinct as if the words had been written yesterday. It said, "Large legacy, a fortune of ninety thousand pounds. Everything comes to those that wait, they say—but they might might also add, too late. I do not care about riches now that she is gone. Of course, for the child's sake, I am most thankful to have the means of leaving India, and the sooner you can come and take her the better. I will meet you at Moghul Serai Station, and—"

If this was her father's letter he did not seem to think much of his child now!—had never thought of her! She put it carefully into her dress, with a vague feeling that it might be useful some day.

At last her boxes were packed and corded, and dispatched on coolies; and she herself, having bid a tearful and affectionate farewell to her schoolfellows and the nuns, set off in a dandy, carried by four men, to make her way to Shirani across the mountains, along the edges of the precipices, on paths two feet wide, called by courtesy bridle-walks, up desperate zig-zag-like corkscrew staircases, along the roads cut in the sides of bleak yellowish hills, meeting nothing but strings of soft-footed camels coming in through the passes from Tibet.

At last, oh, thankful moment! the pine-clad hills and shady roads, and red-roofed houses of Shirani came in sight. It was a pretty place, with valleys full of enormous tree rhododendrons, now in a full blaze of flower.

Above these valleys pine-covered hills, then purple hills, then a faint haze, and above that, towering twenty-seven thousand feet above the plains, the great long range of everlasting snows.

Shirani was a small station, chiefly military. Sylvia passed people riding, and people in "rickshaws," and many nice houses, till at last they came to a road, then a large vegetable garden sprinkled with sun-flowers, and a good-sized two-storied house, Mr. and Mrs. Cock's abode, and her future home! If not refined, it was comfortable.

She had a nice large room to herself, everything was clean and polished to the last degree; but the people themselves they were not polished!

Mr. Cock was an army pensioner. He had got his commission, and risen from the ranks—a hard-working, astute man, who had made his own way.

He had bought some rising house property in Shirani. He made a good deal of money by selling fowls and vegetables, and he occasionally took in one boarder.

He was good-humoured, honest, and plain-spoken, somewhat fond of whisky pegs, in these latter days, and of talking very big about his old corps, and somewhat hen-pecked by Mrs. Cock.

She was just what she had been years ago, a shrill-tongued, pushing, thrifty sergeant's wife, obsequious to her superiors, and



Ready to do anything to get into society; and tyrannical to her servants, and to all who were poor or in her power—an excellent manager and housekeeper, with a very comfortable balance in the Bank of Bengal—a sandy-haired, sharp faced person, who dressed well, and with quite surprising good taste, who subscribed to the local library, and was visited by the parson's wife, and considered "a superior person."

This new lodger was not to her taste; she saw it at a glance—a tall, good-looking girl, and "one of your stand-off ones, too." She much preferred men for lodgers; but this was their only offer, and Lamb and Skinner had made good terms, and paid in advance.

Sylvia was not impressed by her surroundings. Why was she to live in this humble way? Needless to say that the burly, red-faced ex-sergeant was not in society, and his wife was no fitting chaperone for an ambitious young lady.

However, instead of making any outward fuss, Sylvia accepted it all as a matter of course. She was a young woman wise beyond her years. She accepted the present, and bided her time.

In a day or two she had made herself tolerably at home, and taken the bearings of the place. Her own room she arranged with haste.

Mrs. Cook looked on in scornful amazement, as she pushed a table here, a chair there, placed a writing-table in a window, photographs on the chimney-piece, which she previously draped with a cotton cloth bought in the bazaar—cheap, but effective.

Her books—chiefly school books—were arranged in a book-case, and made a most respectable show; and with a jar—also bought in the bazaar, filled with gigantic hill grasses, and a piano hired from the local shop, which provided everything, from pianos to pie-dishes.

Mrs. Cook actually did not know her own room. Sylvia took her meals with her hosts, and soon became accustomed to Mr. Cook's marvellous feats with his knife, his strongly-coloured whisky and water, his homely language, and his one perpetual topic—"my old regiment." She learned as much about military matters in a fortnight as if she had been brought up in a barrack square.

Mr. Cook she did like and did tolerate, and allowed him to come upstairs to listen to her singing, which he assured her "beat all." He liked old ballads, Irish melodies. His favourite songs were "Annie Laurie," and "Take this cup of sparkling wine," and he was not averse to carrying out that injunction in a practical manner.

In the morning he gardened and grubbed and despatched many baskets of fresh green vegetables, whilst his wife did the house-keeping and collected eggs. In the afternoons she was ready (if Sylvia was willing) to take her for a walk. She had never had such a stylish boarder before. Though her dresses were plain, there was an air about her that declared the real lady; and, maybe, when the society in Shirani saw her walking about—handsome girls were scarce—they would come and call and make much of her, and invite her out. And here was Mrs. Cook's chance. She would declare herself her chaperone, and refuse to let her stir without her. She would, figuratively, cling to her skirts, and be thus carried into the highest spheres!

With this end in view, she made much of Sylvia—though in her heart she detested her. She praised her singing, her eyes, her arms. She equipped herself in her best bonnet and gloves, and escorted her out daily, and always at a time when the whole population were circulating about Shirani.

She did not care for secluded winding roads, with lovely glimpses of valleys, and

the faraway snows. No, no! She assured her companion that they were infested by panthers, and always promenaded along the principal mall, which led to the club and library in one (where all Shirani met daily for tea, tennis, and talk), also the one shop, the church, and the barracks of two regiments and officers' quarters.

Along this road they perambulated, Mrs. Cook walking mincingly under her parasol, and furtively scanning all passers-by out of the corner of her cunning green eyes. Yes, they all stared hard at Miss Paske! Ladies whirling by in rickshaws, drawn by four men, girls riding or walking, young men en route to tennis in flannels, or polo in long boots.

Then they would go to the club and library, too, the outer entrance of which was crowded with ponies and pony carts, and rickshaws, and perambulators, and the verandah with a well-dressed crowd, watching the many tennis courts below.

Mrs. Cook would sneak into the reading-room as if she were going to steal something, and sit at the corner of a distant table whilst Sylvia looked for a book and read the English papers! They spoke to no one, and no one spoke to them.

In vain had Mrs. Cook altered her drawing-room, put up clean curtains, bought draperies which Sylvia had arranged—not a soul came to call! It was very odd. They stared hard enough at Miss Paske, and anyone might see she was as good as the best. Perhaps they were not going to visit her, after all, and visions of dinners at the general's, and dances at the mess faded into smoke, and Mrs. Cook became rather less pleasant in her manner to her young lodger.

As to the girl herself, she was enjoying her freedom. She got up early in the morning, and went for delightful long walks along the winding roads among the pines with "Spy," Mr. Cook's terrier, for her sole companion. She never met a soul at this early hour, and the mere sensation of being able to go about alone was pleasure unspeakable.

She detested her afternoon airings with Mrs. Cook, though she secretly liked going to the club and watching the people, and longed for some one to break the ice, and ask her to join tennis. Why did not some of these pleasant-looking ladies call on her? Everyone seemed to know everyone, save her. She alone appeared to be beyond the pale—and why? Was it because she was with Mrs. Cook?

For one thing, she was not aware that in India the last comers call first, though in the case of a young girl this might have been put aside if people had wished to know her most particularly; but people did not wish to know her, and this she soon discovered, with her own ears.

The library was the long room, divided, as it were, into stalls like a stable by heavy book-cases—one partition for fiction, another history, another travels, another mere fiction, by far the most popular and numerous class. As she stood in one of these divisions, or rather knelt, selecting a book, she heard people talking in the next compartment. There seemed to be two ladies and a man, one lady with a deep voice.

"I wish to goodness they would get some new books. All these are as old as the flood. Can you recommend me anything, Captain Watson?"

"Well, no! I don't read much myself, except the papers."

Second lady in a sprightly tone,—

"I know what he reads,—

"His only books are women's books, And folly's all they've taught him."

And she giggled.

"Oh, I say! Mrs. Stewart, that's too bad—you know. I suppose you are coming to the dance here on Thursday?"

"Yes, I suppose I am," she returned, emphatically.

"I hear there won't be half enough ladies. We were counting last night, and we can only make out twenty-nine."

"Have you counted the Smiths?"

"No; that makes thirty-three—we ought to have the three dozens. What about asking that Miss Paske?" she said rather anxiously.

"Miss Paske!" echoed the lady with the sepulchral voice. "Pray, who is Miss Paske?"

"The girl who is living with old Mr. Cook and his wife," said the other lady; "and rather handsome. You may have seen her walking about the roads with Mrs. Cook."

"Oh! that person. She will not be invited, you may be certain of that, Captain Watson."

"Why not? She appears to be a lady. She is young and pretty."

"There is the reason out of your own mouth. Would any young and pretty lady, who had nothing against her, be likely to come and live with the Cooks?—people of that class. Where are her own people? She must have some belongings. She has done something they are ashamed of, and they have sent her here to be quite out of the way. The discarded of society in one place is not likely to be received in Shirani."

"My dear Mrs. Aspe, don't you think you are rather—rather uncharitable? You have no grounds for what you say, have you—come now?"

"Yes. I have been making inquiries. I met old Cook in the road, and began talking of vegetables and eggs. Then I asked him, point-blank, who was his good-looking lady lodger? Just casually, you know."

"Well," impatiently, "what did he say?" "I give you my word, he does not know! Some firm in Calcutta answered his advertisement in the Pioneer, and from what he can gather, her friends are anxious to get rid of her—they are all in England. She has not a soul belonging to her out here. Odd—is it not?"

"Most extraordinary!" said the other lady. "Of course, there must be something queer about her. If she had any belongings she would be with them, unless she has disgraced herself. Has she any money?"

"She has. Her agents paid in advance, and Old Cook receives two hundred rupees a month, and she has fifty for dress and pocket-money—in fact, her people at home are liberal."

"I see you know all about it. Poor Miss Paske," said the man; "I am very sorry she is not to be received in society, for I admire her very much."

"If everyone who has a handsome face was to be in society, we should all be in a bad way—a very bad way," said Mrs. Aspe, moving off, with a loud sniff.

"She would not be received, at any rate," remarked the other lady, with a giggle, to Captain Watson, as they lingered for an instant.

"And a precious good thing for society, too! We can spare the ugly, old women, who have had their day!"

"Oh, you are vexed about Miss Paske."

"I am. I want to get to know her," was his bold reply.

"Oh, you can easily manage that. Go up and speak to her."

"No thank you. Even if she is beyond the pale of society in Mrs. Aspe's opinion, I should not dream of treating her but as a lady."

"Well, what I mean is, make an excuse—offer her an umbrella, run after her with a handkerchief, and pretend you thought it was hers."

"Mrs. Stewart, you are excellent at expedients. You seem to have been served in this way yourself!" he said, ironically.

"Now, Captain Watson, as you are going to be rude I am going to have some tea," and they moved off.

Sylvia Paske remained kneeling on the floor, with a face that had been scarlet, and that now was white; her lips were compressed together, and her heart was beating very fast.

"So this was why no one noticed her. She had been cast off by her family. It was true, and yet for no reason. She had done nothing to disgrace herself. She was far superior (in her own mind) to some of the fast girls in mannish attire she saw riding about, laughing and talking slang at the top of their voices. But they were living under the shelter of their parents' roofs, and she was not. She was a mere, homeless waif, and why—why?" she asked herself, as she got up and replaced a book upside down. "Why? there must be some reason," she muttered, half aloud; "And I swear to myself, as I stand here in this library, that I will find it out!"

Anyone, to look at her mouth and chin could see that she was a young woman of strong force of character, and likely to keep her word.

After that day, she went no more to the club, and she saw nought of society save in the distance. She firmly declined afternoon promenades in public places, and Mrs. Cook did not see the good of wasting her toilettes on lonely walks, and climbing steep hillsides. Their mutual airings became a thing of the past. Mr. Cook was desperately disappointed; her schemes were futile, but she had another project yet in her sandy head. The clergyman's wife had called (her quarterly visit), had met Sylvia, and been much struck with her; had heard her sing, and was truly sorry that such a voice, and such a knowledge of music, could not be made use of in the choir of the garrison church!

Miss Paske went to chapel every Sunday. Mrs. Sherwood was friendly and unaffected, and invited Sylvia to afternoon tea at her house.

After some sore struggling with pride Sylvia went. She had told herself that she might be thankful to have one lady friend. She had the nuns, it was true—but in worldly wisdom they were as innocent as so many babes.

Now she required a certain amount of experience, and to enable her to cope with the task she had laid upon herself, and some few crumbs of value might (figuratively) be picked up at Mrs. Sherwood's tea table.

The Parsonage was a pleasant house, with a deep verandah, and the parson's wife had taste—say, and tact.

As Miss Paske sipped her Kumaoow tea and nibbled seed cake, she endeavoured, in a polite way, to discover who she was, and and where were her friends.

"I only wish I knew myself. My history is easily told, and you are welcome to hear it. Indeed, I am very glad to impart it to you, as you may give me advice, and in the ways of the world; and I am very, very ignorant," was her visitor's surprisingly frank answer.

"Ignorant, are you?" exclaimed her hostess.

"Yes. My father placed me at Ramnee convent when I was two years old, and I have never seen him or heard from him since."

"Good gracious! how very odd!" ejaculated the other.

"He paid for me through his agents regularly, and when I was eighteen—four months ago—he sent a letter to the Lady Superior, asking if I was likely to have a vocation, and to take the veil."

"Yes; and will you?"

"No. I have reason to believe he is most bitterly disappointed. I have, therefore, through the means of his agents, been removed from the convent, and sent here to live with Mr. and Mrs. Cook," her lower lip trembled as she spoke.

"What a shame! Those people are not in your class of life."

"No; at least, they are not educated, and I have been very well taught. I speak French and German, and I can play, and I have read a good deal. As to my class of life, it may be the same as theirs for all I know."

"I think not. You have race in your face and in your voice. Do you not know anything of your father?"

"No. He never answered my many letters or noticed my little school-girl presents. He lives in London, I think, and I imagine he is well off; but I know nothing about him."

"What was he doing out here?"

"I really do not know. He brought me to the convent one wet day in the rain, and said my name was Sylvia; but I used to say my name was Effie—which is odd."

"What was he like?" questioned the parson's wife.

"About thirty-five, dark, short, and squarely-built."

"Your mother?"

"She died before that, and I do not know if I have any brothers or sisters. I know nothing—nothing."

"And you have not the slightest clue to the reason for your being, as it were, cast out of the family nest and abandoned in India?"

"No clue, but I mean to find one."

"How? I am examining you, am I not, like a lawyer?"

"I cannot say. One thing is certain. I am not going to spend all my days with Mr. and Mrs. Cook. My idea is to go home—when I have saved up a little money."

"But you know no one at home, my dear girl."

"That is true; but everything must have a beginning. I know no one up here. This is a waste of life."

"At least you have a roof over your head, food to eat, clothes to wear, 'things' not to be despised."

"And they may content me when I am an old woman, but it will not satisfy me now. Would it satisfy you if you were in my place? Mrs. Sherwood, please answer me honestly," a light springing into her eyes.

"To answer you honestly, then, it would not, and I wish I saw my way to helping you."

"You can help me greatly if you choose," said the girl, eagerly.

"How? You may be sure I will if I can."

"First, by keeping my history a secret from Shirani; and next by telling me about Calcutta, the name of a respectable hotel, how I travel there from here, and a few things about England."

"I can give you a railway guide, and I can give you the name of an hotel; but what can I tell you about England?"

"Whatever you please. I know so little. All will be new to me."

"First of all, be careful how you make friends, my dear. Study to be reserved, and keep your own counsel."

"That advice is easily followed," said the girl, gravely.

"Do not go to an hotel in London. Get the stewardess, when you land, to recommend some quiet, respectable lodging, and from there you can prosecute your search, and get the woman of the house to accompany you when you go out. You are too pretty to go alone."

"I can wear a thick veil."

"Yes; but I think a burly matron would be a better protection. Pay cash for everything, and don't carry all your money about with you. Hold your purse in your hand. Oh! here is my husband. We will finish this conversation at another time. I shall be delighted to help you; and I will give you my sister's address in London, and ask her to go and see you. We will arrange all this next time you come to tea."

(To be continued next week.)

## Guy Forrester's Secret

By FLORENCE HODGKINSON.

Author of "Ivy's Peril," "Dolly's Legacy,"

"Dorothy's Heartache," &c.

### CHAPTER XI (continued.)

LADY MUNRO reached the station as the train was steaming in. She acted very differently to the day when she took the same journey to meet her child's governess. This time she never left the brougham, but directed the footman to conduct Mrs. Jenkins from the platform.

"A lady in widow's weeds, James," she said, quietly; "you can't be mistaken." But when she saw the person accompanying her footman she was not so positive. She began to think James had been mistaken after all. Could that ogling, mincing be-fuzzled creature, whose dress would have suited a girl of seventeen, be her guest? Was it possible any woman could like to make such an exhibition of herself!

Mrs. Jenkins was quite equal to the occasion. She was not prepared to like the countess, whom she regarded as having kept her out of her rights for seven years. There was, to Lady Munro's surprise, a shade of patronage in her manner.

"Very kind of you to meet me, I'm sure," said Emmeline, with a little giggle; "but you need not have troubled yourself. Mr. Forrester would have taken care of me."

Lady Munro repented bitterly the terms of her invitation, which ran—"for a month or longer, if you do not grow tired of a dull, country house." Should she ever live through four weeks of this lady's society! And in common pity for poor Guy she foresaw the brunt of entertaining Mrs. Jenkins must fall on herself.

But though she had not been born in the ranks of the nobility—though she was the daughter of a simple country clergyman, and had toiled honourably for her bread before she married—the Countess of Munro was fully capable of maintaining her own dignity, and exacting the courtesy due to her.

"I prefer to meet my own guests," she said, quietly. "My husband would have accompanied me, but he had an engagement this afternoon."

"Oh, the naughty man!"

"I think you and Lord Munro are old acquaintances?" hazarded the countess.

"The greatest friends in the world we always were until—" Mrs. Jenkins came to a dead stop, and hung her head in a manner which was meant to be pathetic, and was really ludicrous.



"Until your marriage!" finished Lady Munro, determined to put things on a comfortable, commonplace footing. "I think it took place a month or two after our own. I believe you have no children?"

Mrs. Jenkins shook her head.

"Thank Heaven, no! Little torments, at least I am spared that affliction."

If she had wanted her hostess to dislike her she had gone just the right way to work.

"I fear our sentiments differ widely," said the countess, gravely; "my child is the comfort of my life."

"I thought it was dead? I was told so, I am sure, and that poor dear Guy had come into his rights again!"

Lady Munro began to consider which of her sins had drawn down upon her head such a terrible penance as she foresaw Mrs. Jenkins's society would prove. But she was a gentlewoman and the widow was her guest; so she commanded her temper. And it was only the extreme politeness, the icy courtesy of her tone, which showed any change in her sentiments for Emmeline.

"My son, Viscount Forrester, died this year. I was alluding to my daughter, the Lady Dorothea, who has been spared to make the sunshine of our home."

It was probably the very first time she had spoken of her children to a guest by their titles; but the formality made no impression on Mrs. Jenkins.

"Oh! and she can't take anything, being a girl; so she makes no difference to Guy."

"Mr. Forrester is extremely fond of his little cousin. She loves him dearly."

Mrs. Jenkins gave a little laugh.

"I see you want your daughter to be the next countess, but it is too absurd. Why she must be a mere baby!"

"She is seven years old, and I can assure you Mrs. Jenkins, I never made a plan for her future life. I am too happy with her as she is."

A little silence, then Emmeline returned to the charge, and perceiving, dense as she was, that she was not making ground, changed her tactics.

"You cannot think the pleasure your invitation gave me, Lady Munro! I have suffered so much these last months; gone through such bitter experience of alights and neglect from my own kindred, that your kind letter was doubly welcome to me in my sadness."

The countess thawed just a little. After all, Mrs. Jenkins had experienced great trials. It might have been trouble that had made her what she was.

"Although I have never seen you I felt great sympathy when I heard of Mr. Jenkins's death. It must have been such a terrible blow."

"It was indeed. One day I was the wife of a millionaire,—or a man I thought one—the next I found myself the widow of an insolvent merchant. It was perfectly frightful, Lady Munro. We counted our income by thousands. We had a charming bijou villa. Well, they sent me out of it penniless, and at last allowed me a paltry hundred a year."

Kathleen's sympathy had been for her husband's death. Mrs. Jenkins applied it to her loss of fortune, but the countess did not trouble to correct her mistake.

"I think you went to your sister? We were told so at the time. It must have been a great comfort to you to be with her?"

"It was a terrible trial. She treated me abominably. She married beneath her—a mere struggling barrister, whom Mr. Jenkins and I should never have asked to dinner. The least she could have done would be to give me a home, but she turned me out at the end of a few weeks; and Mr.

Carlyle wrote me out a cheque for twenty pounds, and then washed his hands of me."

Lady Munro felt she could understand it. The presence of Mrs. Jenkins, even in her luxurious home, where people could go their different ways and meet only at meal times, seemed likely to prove a terrible infliction. What must it have been in a small suburban house, where her luckless hosts could not escape from her?

"I pitied Guy when he told me his secret," reflected the countess. "I thought things had gone terribly hard with him, but I am sure I should have pitied him a thousand times more if he were going to marry Mrs. Jenkins."

She tried to lead the subject to commonplace topics, and succeeded tolerably, though Mrs. Jenkins introduced her quondam suitor's name at every opportunity, and always by the unprefixed title of "Guy." Lady Munro felt that she ought to stop this, but she hardly knew how; she was very glad when she found herself on her own threshold.

"Dinner is at seven," she told her guest; "and we are quite alone except Mr. Forrester and Sir Ira Vernon. Will you take tea with me, or shall I send it to your room?"

Emmeline preferred the latter course. Lady Munro sent her own maid to assist Mrs. Jenkins, dispensing with the abigail's aid herself, since her soft black net and jet ornaments required little skill or adjustment. She was in the drawing-room, looking the picture of a refined, graceful matron when Guy Forrester came in.

"How nervous you look!" said Kathleen, with a smile. "Guy, are you quite sure your cure is perfect?"

"I am certain."

"Then I may speak plainly. I think if there was any chance of your marrying her, I should feel inclined to kidnap her and imprison her on some desert island till you were tired of your infatuation."

"Then you don't like her?"

Lady Munro smiled.

"I think you will find her very much altered."

There was no time for more—Mrs. Jenkins was entering. Lady Munro flashed one glance at Guy, and then looked resolutely on the ground. Never before had she beheld such a marvellous costume on a six months' widow! It was black, certainly, but there all attempt at mourning ended. The train was of billowy satin, half-shrouded in lace; the bodice consisted of a broad Spanish belt and shoulder-straps edged with lace. Kathleen tried to be charitable, and hoped the costume was a relic of her guest's wealthy days, for it must have cost certainly three months of her present income.

"You will remember my nephew?" said the Countess, gravely. "Mr. Forrester, Mrs. Jenkins."

"Delighted to see you!" And giving him her hand she left it in his as though anxious to make him a present of it on the spot—a proceeding he found very inconvenient, since his only plan of escape was to drop it like a bell-handle. "I should have known you anywhere."

Guy could not return the compliment. But for Lady Munro's introduction he would have declared there must be some mistake, and that this simply could not be his fair, false love of other days. Was this the creature whose loss had driven him to desperation, to banish whose image he had turned headlong on the road to ruin? Was it for this dressed-up doll—resembling nothing so much as a fashion plate—he had been near to taking the life his Maker gave him? He had repented bitterly of those few months of folly; had rued his weakness

times without end; only he had never felt so thoroughly ashamed of himself as now, and never in his heart had he felt his debt of gratitude to Jabez Smith so enormous as at this moment.

At Lady Munro's side every one of Emmeline's weaknesses showed—the one a graceful matron, wearing her years as though they were an honour, a perfect picture of what a wife and mother should resemble; the other painted, rouged, powdered, her very dress such as it seemed to Guy no modest woman could have brought herself to put on.

His silence conveyed an entirely wrong impression to Mrs. Jenkins. She believed him too overcome by the meeting to be able to speak; and half to set him at ease, half to convince Lady Munro of the hold she possessed on him, said she coquettishly,—

"Ah, Guy! this is like old times, is it not? I have been telling the Countess she need not trouble herself about my entertainment while you are here. You always made me your first care."

Guy glanced helplessly at his aunt. Nothing could have been further from his intentions than undertaking the care of Mrs. Jenkins. Only she was a woman, and so he shrank from speaking his mind.

Lady Munro was equal to the occasion.

"I don't think I need depute my duties to Mr. Forrester. I can entertain my own guests; at least, I have always done so hitherto. Besides, my nephew is leaving us early in the new year."

Mrs. Jenkins turned to Guy.

"Are you really going to leave Ardmore once more? I should have thought you could not have torn yourself away."

Mr. Forrester spoke then for the first time, and the cold formality of his tone struck even the flighty widow.

"Circumstances will probably require my presence in London next month; but I shall return to Ardmore after a brief absence, since my uncle and aunt are kind enough to call it my home."

Lady Munro felt dismayed.

Guy had made a big blunder, since this speech would assuredly induce Mrs. Jenkins to prolong her visit until his return.

It was a relief to each of the trio when Lord Munro and Sir Ira appeared, closely followed by the announcement of dinner.

The earl, in right of his rank and position, escorted Emmeline. Sir Ira gave his arm to the countess. Guy went down by himself, but he was quick enough to seat himself on that side of the table where only one cover was laid.

The fair widow thus found herself between the host and the baronet, a tall flowering plant almost hiding Guy from her bewitching glances.

But he could not escape from her in the evening. She paid him the most embarrassing attentions, and yet, as a gentleman, he could not tell her so.

It wanted a fortnight to New Year's Day, and it seemed to poor Mr. Forrester that the days would seem like years if he had to spend them in the society of Mrs. Jenkins.

"It is awful, you know," he confided to Lady Munro, when he had gone through a week of penance. He had to precede his aunt to the nursery to make his little confidence, for Emmeline never left them alone together downstairs. "It really is terrible. If to-morrow were not Christmas Day I think I would go to London to-night."

"What has she done now?" asked Kathleen, with a slight smile.

Emmeline was very trying; but she did not suffer from her one quarter as much as Guy, and knowing she had no chance of re-

ceiving Mrs. Jenkins as a niece, the countess could sometimes enjoy the ludicrous side of the situation.

"Told me she had no prejudice against second marriages, and that she considers a year ample mourning time for the best of husbands."

"She must think you very bashful to need so much encouragement."

"I don't care what she thinks."

"I wish your uncle had never suggested inviting her. Now Sir Ira has set off on his travels we might be so cosy but for her."

Guy groaned.

"Do you know where Vernon is?"

"London."

"And did you guess his errand?"

"No. I could not imagine what took him away from Fairlawn at this time."

"He has gone to look for her."

"Poppie?"

"But he was so unkind to her."

"He told me all before he left. Told me that if the sacrifice of years from his own life could blot out the result of his cruelty to her he would give them gladly. He has gone to look for her—to spend time, money and strength upon the search, and if he finds her, to bring her back to you, or secure her some other easeful home."

"I never thought he could be so generous."

"I fancy he had no idea his persecution would drive her away. He loved her passionately, and thought any means fair that would win her to be his own."

"Why, Guy, you speak as if you pitied her!"

"I do more—I envy him."

"Guy!"

"He is free," said Mr. Forrester, slowly.

"He can play the part of guide, friend, and comforter to her, because he knows and could show to the whole world it only rests with herself to be his honoured wife—and I can do nothing for her, nothing! The kindest thing in my power is never to see her again."

"Did you hear from Miss Anastasia Smith? I have always forgotten to ask you."

"I did! A most remarkable letter, in which she said she did not know Poppie's address, and could not tell me if she did, as she knew her little friend had but one wish connected with me—never to see my face nor hear my name."

"Poor girl!"

"I think she will marry Ira," said Mr. Forrester, after a long pause, "that is, if he finds her. His pursuit of her will at least have proved the sincerity of his love, and, poor little wanderer, she may have gone through so much that it will be a relief to feel herself safe for ever under a true man's protection. But, Aunt Kathleen, we have wandered from my errand. How am I to repress Mrs. Jenkins's attentions?"

"I should tell her the truth."

"The truth!"

"Not unless obliged," said the countess, gravely, "but if she persists in her unwomanly conduct, I think it the wisest plan."

But perhaps Emmeline felt she had overstepped her mark. Perhaps the quiet displeasure of Lady Munro's manner warned her she had gone too far; for suddenly she changed her tactics, and, for a fortnight, Guy really enjoyed comparative peace, so that instead of going to London, directly after the festivities of New Years Day, he lingered till nearly the middle of January. Then he fixed his departure, hoping devoutly, for his aunt's sake, Mrs. Jenkins would acknowledge the defeat of her scheme and return to her London lodgings.

When she heard that in two days' time

Guy was to leave, Emmeline prepared for a last effort. She went into the library where Mr. Forrester was writing letters, and asked him how long he should be away?

"It is quite uncertain. I fear there is no chance of my returning before the expiration of your visit, and we must say our farewells on Thursday."

"And you can laugh at it, cruel man!"

"Well, you see," replied Guy, trying hard to say something decisive, that yet should not sound too harsh, "when one has been away from home and country for several years, one thinks but little of parting."

"And you can say that to me?"

Guy felt hot.

"My dear Mrs. Jenkins," he began, gravely.

"Say Emmeline," she interrupted him.

"Emmeline, then," said Guy, making this concession, because he felt victory was in his grasp. "I think you make a great mistake in our relations to each other. Years ago I was your lover—your faithful, devoted lover—but you yourself dismissed me, and from that moment you put it out of my power to be to you anything but an acquaintance."

"Not now," she pleaded, softly; "the barrier between us was removed last June, dear Guy!"

"The barrier between us exists at the present moment," said Mr. Forrester, gravely; "and I repeat that we can never stand in the position we once occupied to each other."

"The barrier still exists! But Mr. Jenkins died last June."

"But Mrs. Forrester did not," said Guy, driven into speaking plainly. "I married only a few months after yourself, and my wife is still alive."

"What on earth has happened?" said the countess, coming to her nephew two hours later. "Mrs. Jenkins has left the Castle; she denounced me as a perfidious traitress, and told me she hoped I should be punished for my cruelty."

"I followed your advice."

"And told her?"

"It was better," he said, slowly. "I had kept the secret seven weary years, and it will now be noised abroad; but, after all, there is no disgrace in it, and the knowledge that there exists a Mrs. Forrester will, at least, protect me from all future attempts at match-making."

Enter a servant with a telegram on a silver salver. Guy tore it open; then, as he read the message, his very lips grew white.

"What is it?" cried the countess.

"Oh, Guy, what has happened?"

He put the missive into her hands.

"Fordred Brothers, Temple, to the Hon. Guy Forrester, Ardmore, Mons.—She is dying. Come at once."

"Oh, Guy!" said the countess, brokenly, "does it mean your wife?"

He bowed his head.

"Take me with you," pleaded Kathleen.

"I cannot. No, she never did me any wrong. You must not think harshly of her. I married her, a mere child, seven years ago, and we have only met once since for one brief half-hour. She accepted me to please her grandfather; and during my absence developed into a strong-minded woman with a mania for women's rights; but I believe she had a warm, true heart."

"You have told me more than you intended," said the countess. "Your wife's name is Anastasia Smith!"

## CHAPTER XII.

The doctor whom Mrs. Finch had summoned to the lodger's bedside looked

ominously grave when he glanced at Poppie's flushed face and glittering eyes.

He was not a hard-hearted man, but a large practice among people too poor to pay him proper fees, and too busy that they had no time to waste on needless conversation, had made his manner abrupt, and painfully plain-spoken.

"Brain fever," he said, succinctly, after his brief examination of the girl, "and likely to prove a bad case."

"Law, sir, is it catching?"

"Catching! Oh, dear, no; but it wants a deal of care and attentive nursing. You'd better send for her friends."

"I don't think she's got any, sir."

"Bad job. Have you known her long?"

"Nigh on three weeks, sir, and I've never seen her write a letter, or get one, either. She's copying them papers all day long."

"Well, you'd better send her to the hospital. Get a cab, and pack her off at once."

"I can't, sir," said the humble samaritan, respectfully, "I couldn't bring myself to—"

"You're a simpleton."

"If it had been catching I must have made up my mind and let her go; but you say, sir, it ain't, and I'm a widow with daughters of my own. I couldn't go to turn her out. I've one of my girls at home now as is handy in a sick room, and, no doubt, we'll manage somehow."

Dr. Brown stared, but he was not to be outdone in generosity.

If Mrs. Finch did not grudge time, strength, and food to this lonely wail, he could afford her a share of his skill. So he gave a few necessary directions, and took his leave, observing,—

"I think you're behaving like an idiot, you know (he had attended her for twenty years), but I'll do what I can to help you, and you can send round to Mrs. Brown for anything in the way of kitchen stuff you want."

Then began a fight between life and death.

If Poppie had been an heiress, watched over by doating parents, nursed by hospital sisters, and attended by court physicians, she might have slipped through their fingers just by way of contrariety. As it was, friendless, deserted, in the humble lodging, her own feelings, if consulted, strongly in favour of death, and no one to care save Dr. Brown, for the honour of his skill, and Mrs. Finch from simple humanity.

Poppie's youth and good constitution asserted themselves, and instead of dying the first week, as her attendants had rather expected, she made a gallant fight with the fever.

"I believe she'll pull through it yet," said the doctor to his old patient, Mrs. Finch. "I wonder who she is. I expect she has a history. What name did she give you, by the way?"

"Smith, sir, Miss Smith."

"She's a married lady," returned the doctor.

"Law, sir, you don't mean it."

"Look here."

He had been playing with the ornaments on the poor child's watchchain with the restless impudence of a clear, excitable man all the time he was in the room; and just before he put that question to Mrs. Finch as to his patient's name the spring of a large gold locket had flown open, disclosing a small folded paper.

Dr. Brown was very inquisitive, but he deemed it his duty to try and find some clue to the poor girl's identity; so he carefully dislodged and unfolded the paper.



When Mrs. Finch came up from the kitchen to receive his directions, he knew the secret poor Poppie had hidden so zealously from every living creature.

You may have guessed it, reader; the pretty flower title was only hers by the gift of affection.

She had been christened Anastasia, and she, not the strong-minded defender of woman's rights, had been the grandchild commended by Jabez Smith to Guy Forrester's care.

Same and shrewd man of business as he was on one point, the lawyer had been almost morbidly eccentric.

He was infuriated with the fear his darling would be married for her money; the third and last of the conditions on which he freed Mr. Forrester from his debts was that he made Anastasia his wife.

They were married by special license in the drawing-room of Acacia Lodge on the brief visit Guy paid there, and it was agreed Mrs. Forrester should not hear that name until her husband returned to claim her, and no human being was taken into confidence but the clergyman who performed the ceremony, and Mr. Smith's old housekeeper.

Seven years passed away. Poppie, who had submitted to be married to please her grandfather, changed from the shy, plain, unformed girl of seventeen into a beautiful and captivating woman.

The very idea of being foisted upon Mr. Forrester as an unwelcome wife was odious to her.

The old clergyman and the housekeeper were both dead.

The secret of the marriage was now known only to three people—Jabez Smith and the wedded pair.

Confiding a little, only a little, in Miss Anastasia Smith her namesake and god-mother, Poppie conceived the idea of disgusting Guy with his bargain, and making him renounce all idea of claiming her, hence the extraordinary letter she wrote to him at Maryland.

The Fordreds had been her friends since her childhood, but Jim's unsuccessful wooing had made a little embarrassment in their intercourse, therefore she could not flee to them; so as soon as her grandfather's funeral was over she took refuge with her namesake. She told Stacy a part of her history; how Mr. Forrester had been selected by her grandfather as her protector and guardian, but she kept back all allusion to the real tie between them. Stacy, who was marvellously wide-awake, never suspected the truth. She thought Jabez Smith had wished his darling to become Mrs. Guy Forrester—that he had actually made her so she never dreamed.

Poppie possessed a small property as Mr. Fordred told Guy, independent of her grandfather's will. This she offered Stacy to "use for the cause" if she would represent her at the interview with Mr. Forrester, and procure her a good situation as governess.

Stacy might have resisted any temptation, appealing only to her own interests, but she could not refuse anything which advanced the cause.

She tried hard to persuade herself she was doing nothing wrong. After all, Mr. Forrester could feel no great interest in a ward he had only seen once in his life; and as Poppie had determined not to meet him, as she was really only "Anastasia Smith," there was no harm in her representing herself as such.

Throughout the interview she spoke of Jabez as "old Mr. Smith." She never called him "grandfather," so she deemed herself innocent of all fraud. Little did she

dream the handsome soldierly man, whom, even with her aversion to all things masculine, she could not help admiring, regarded her as his wedded wife!

She made a great deal of trouble both in Guy's life and Poppie's, but she never intended it.

When Mr. Forrester wrote to her from Castle Ardmore, begging for Poppie's address, a suspicion came to her she had acted unwisely, and she wished she had never meddled in the business, but it was too late now. She could not do Poppie any good by confessing their deception, so she returned the answer Guy quoted to the countess.

And now the plain hard-working London surgeon held the secret which had wrought so much trouble.

Dr. Brown, by a strange chance, came from Monmouth, and had relations near Ardmore. He knew Guy Forrester's history as it was given to the public. His brief dissipation, the mysterious payment of his debts, his seven years' exile, his return and reported wonderful accession to wealth joined with his fixed aversion to matrimony.

The doctor grasped the fact by degrees. This girl, who lay struggling with death on a humble pallet bed, was, in deed and truth, the Honourable Mrs. Forrester, and must, if she lived long enough, one day rule at Ardmore Castle as Countess of Munro.

"It is quite true," said the doctor to Mrs. Finch (he had carefully replaced the certificate in its hiding-place before the good widow appeared); "this young lady is the wife of the richest man in England, and, in all probability, her being ill at your house will make your fortune; so I am glad you didn't listen to my prudent advice and send her to the hospital."

Mrs. Finch gasped. Then she began to cry.

"He must be a rank bad 'un, sir," she said, positively. "He may be the richest man in the world, but he must have a heart like stone to let that poor child work her pretty self into a fever."

"I have no doubt there has been some estrangement, but I think it will all come right now. She may have been petulant or exacting, but a man would forgive a good deal in a girl with a face like hers."

"Seems to me," said Mrs. Finch, who, although she had tempted Providence by taking a husband, yet retained an opinion of the male sex which would have rejoiced Stacy's heart, "seems to me the forgiving should be all on the other side. You've only to look at her face, poor dear, to see she's an angel, and I daresay her husband was just the other thing. Most men are. Bless me, what's that?"

It was a double knock, so loud and prolonged, that, without waiting to hear the doctor's defence of his sex—if he attempted one—Mrs. Finch hastened down to open the door.

She saw a gentleman, quite young, and with every mark of prosperity, yet looking haggard, anxious. The widow jumped to the idea he was the erring husband, and determined to give him a piece of her mind.

"Does Miss Smith live here?"

"I can't say that," said Mrs. Finch, looking at him keenly, and watching his face to see the effect of the blow; "but she's dying here, if that's the same."

She regretted the moment she had spoken, for the misery on his face was such she felt he could not willingly have let her favourite suffer.

"I'm real sorry I spoke so strange, sir, but she's real bad, and that's the truth of it. I suppose you're her husband, for the doctor says she's got one, which I'm sure I

never suspected, seeing what a bit of a child she looks."

The appearance of Dr. Brown was a relief to one of the pair at least.

Motioning Mrs. Finch upstairs, he led the way to the deserted parlour.

"Mr. Forrester, I presume?"

"Oh, no;" and Jim Fordred found his task of explanation far easier now he had a man to deal with. "I am not Miss Smith's guardian, but we have been friends ever since I can remember. My father and uncle managed all Miss Smith's affairs. I met Poppie in the Strand on the third of January, and she appeared in great trouble. I tried hard to induce her to go to my mother, but all she would do was to trust me with her address, and promised to write to me once a week. When ten days elapsed I got uneasy, and came down to look after her."

"And you are no relation?"

"I am her friend," pleaded Jim. "As to relations, she hasn't one in the world."

"Except her husband."

"She was never married, sir." Jim's honest face flushed. "Times upon times I've begged her to be my wife, but she always made me the same answer: 'her wedding day would never dawn.' It sounds a strange way of wording it, but I am sure she meant it."

"I am sure so too; and her manner of wording her refusal is easily explained. Her wedding day would never dawn, because it has past."

"Past!"

"Seven years ago last November she married Guy Forrester. I have seen the certificate to-day."

"Then that explains all. Mr. Smith left his granddaughter to Mr. Forrester's care. Oh, why didn't she say he was her husband!"

"Then there is a lasting estrangement between them?"

Jim shook his head.

"I didn't believe they had ever met; but they must have done so once, on the occasion of the marriage."

"And Mr. Forrester deserted her?"

"No," said Jim, who loved fair play. "From the moment of his return to England he tried to find her. He spoke of her as his 'ward.' Ultimately she refused his protection, and disappeared."

"Well, he must be sent for now."

"Wouldn't it be better to wait?"

"Wait till she dies? The crisis in her illness comes to-morrow. What would be the use of sending for him after that if she died?"

"I know his address. Shall I telegraph to him?" asked poor Jim humbly.

"You had better."

Jim sent the message in the name of the firm, and did not give the address of Miss Smith's lodgings. It seemed better to him that Guy should learn something of the truth before he reached there.

Mr. James Fordred was at the office early the next day, but he was hardly prepared to find Mr. Forrester there before him. Guy looked as though he had travelled all night. He was pale and stern, but Jim could not doubt his faithful, generous nature.

"If only she had trusted him," was his unspoken regret.

"Mr. Forrester," he began, awkwardly, when the clerks had ushered Guy into his private room and left them alone together, "I regret my father and uncle are not in town, but I think I can supply their place, for I sent the telegram which brought you here on my own authority."

Guy understood then his rival was before him. Poor fellow, he must be of peculiar type to love the stern defender of women's rights so devotedly, but that he did love her his troubled face testified.

"I will only ask you one thing—my wife's address."

"I will take you there. Oh, it is no trouble," as Guy attempted some apology. "If I could stand outside the door all day, just on the chance of hearing she was better, I should be thankful."

Guy was touched.

"I heard you wished to marry her," he said, gravely. "I feel I must be an unpleasant companion for you."

"No," said Jim, simply; "If you had never married her I should be no nearer. Only she is so tender, so lonely and unprotected. If she gets over this, couldn't you try to make her happy?"

"My good fellow," said Guy, sadly, "Don't you know she won't have anything to say to me? She has given over heart and soul to politics and women's rights. When I came to England I had but one thought—to make a home for my wife. I went to see her, and she point-blank refused to have anything to do with me."

"She is such a child; you might have forgiven her."

"She is a child in age, I confess, but she seemed years older than me. I could hardly realise she was only twenty-three."

Jim looked startled.

"She looks about seventeen. Old Mr. Smith used to tell her she would be a child all her days. She has hair of a bright brow shade, which turns gold in the sunlight, and her eyes are like two brown pansies. Mr. Forrester, I can't help thinking you have not seen her at all."

Guy seemed bewildered.

"I can solve the question," said Jim, simply. "Long ago she gave me her photograph, and—I did not know, you see, she was your wife. I always wear it here."

Guy gave one glance at the open locket; then he started.

"Why, it's Poppie!"

"Her grandfather always called her so. Mr. Forrester, I can't understand you. You seem to know the face and yet not to realise it is your wife's."

"My wife's!"

"Surely—Anastasia Smith."

"Fordred, let me tell you my story. I met this child in the autumn, and I fell hopelessly in love with her, only I dared not say so, for this wretched marriage stood between us. Then I lost her, and discovered her only friend and intimate was—my own wife! Judge of the misery of my position. I loved her more than life, but I dared not seek her because I was bound hand and foot to Anastasia Smith."

"I see it all," said Jim, slowly; "she always was fond of jokes. She made Miss Anastasia Smith, her godmother and rather a celebrated lecturer on women's rights, represent her when you called."

"I feel dazed!" said poor Guy. "Can't you put it plainly, and tell me in one word which is my wife—Poppie or Anastasia Smith?"

"Poppie; but she is, or rather was until you married her, Anastasia Smith."

Guy wrung the young lawyer's hand.

"You will take me to her?"

"Aye."

"And Fordred, if she is spared, I don't think you need fear for her happiness. Anastasia may have been cold and independent, but Poppie will make friends."

\* \* \* \* \*

The August sun was ripening the yellow corn for the second time since Guy Forrester's return to England. The summer sky was bright and cloudless, and all the villagers and tenants of Ardmore lined the road from Rock Ferry station to the Castle, for the place was en fête.

That day, a year ago, mid general mourning, the old Earl of Munro had been borne to his grave. Now, with joyful hearts, those who had served him were preparing to welcome his successor, who, after many a month of travel in distant lands, was returning to take possession of his heritage.

A whole year and more than half a second had elapsed since the heir left Ardmore suddenly, on urgent business. Since that, had come the rumour he was married, and gone abroad for his wife's health. He did not even return for his uncle's funeral.

The widow and her little girl had joined him at Baden. They had been home some time now, and were settled at the Dower House, but both the widowed countess and Lady Dorothea had gone to the Castle today, to welcome back its lord.

A shout of triumph, a cheer from a hundred voices, and the carriage, drawn by its four gallant greys, dashed up the avenue.

Guy, Earl of Munro, a look of quiet, deep happiness on his face, handed out his wife.

His wife, the new Countess of Munro, was very pretty; some declared they recognised her at once, and she had been on a long visit to the Castle before, but all agreed she was altered.

Never in those days had she looked so dazzlingly joyous, so radiantly beautiful. The earl's eyes rested on her face with tenderest pride as he led her to his aunt.

"You always loved her," he said, gently, "and I know you will welcome her to her home."

"With all my heart," said Kathleen, kissing the sweet face; "and, Guy, I never was so glad as when I learned that Poppie was—herself."

It had been a long and tedious convalescence, and one that had made Guy's heart ache many a time with the fear that he should lose his treasure; but it was over now, and no one could look at the young countess and connect her with delicate health.

Presently the earl led her out on to the terrace to receive the ovation of the crowd, his cousin, little Lady Dorothea, hovering at the other side, and in the rear a stately nurse, bearing something which looked like a bundle of cambric and lace, but was, in reality, the Hon. Raymond Guy Evelyn, Viscount Forrester.

There was a great deal to talk about that night at dinner, at which Dolly made good her claim to be present; how Stacy Smith had gone to America, and found it a country after her own heart; how Mrs. Finch was lodge-keeper, and delighted in the country life; and Dr. Brown had promised his first holiday should be spent at Ardmore Castle.

But when Dolly and her mother had gone home, and Guy and his wife sat in the sweet August evening enjoying the fragrant flower-scented air, a shade of gravity crept over them both.

"I wish she had not done that, Guy. I know we could help it, but it makes me sorry."

She alluded to Mrs. Jenkins, who, when they passed through London, had insisted on calling on them, and reproaching them in round terms for the neglect of the many begging-letters she had presented them with abroad.

"My dearest," said Guy, fondly, "I think she is a trifle mad. I called on Carlyle about her this morning, and he assures me she would be no richer if I made her an allowance. 'It would all go in—' He paused, and substituted for the word he had meant to use a milder one—'folly.' He says for his wife's sake he shall not lose sight of her; and if I can ever be of use he will let me know."

"But, Guy, I feel as if I had done it."

"You, sweetheart! Why you never saw Mrs. Jenkins in your life!"

"But I robbed her of you."

"And a very good thing for me, Poppie," anxiously, for he thought he heard a tear in her voice. "Surely you believe you are my first and dearest?—that no action of my life has ever been more blessed than the one that gave you to me?"

"I think you love me."

"Love you, child!" his voice broke.

"Aye, better than name or fortune!—better than home or that crowing boy upstairs! Poppie, if you ask how I love my wife you have my answer—more than aught on earth!"

She nestled the least bit closer.

"And as regards reproaching yourself about Mrs. Jenkins, you know I might just as well be wretched because Ira Vernon and young Fordred were deprived of you through my instrumentality. To be sure, Vernon has married a duke's daughter, whom he respects if he does not love; and Dolly, who at eight years old is a professed coquette, has fixed her affections on Jim. It's a strange thing, but the little witch has something of your manner. I shouldn't be surprised if, a few years hence, her eyes held consolation for your old playfellow."

"You blame poor old Sir Joshua for match-making," retorted Poppie, "but you are ever so much worse."

"Am I? Well, Poppie, there is one matchmaker, child, whose memory I shall love and reverence all my days—to whom I owe my life's happiness. You know whom I mean?"

"Yes."

"To Jabez Smith, your grandfather and my benefactor I owe all I am, all I have—fortune, honour, position; and, last, yet more precious than all—ANASTASIA SMITH!"

[THE END.]

## THE SOCIAL PROPHET.

He seems a man who merits praise  
In certain qualities and ways,  
And might be nice to meet, if, oh!  
He would not say, "I told you so!"

I dare affirm that never yet  
My lips have framed since first we met,  
A piece of news he did not know,  
But he has said, "I told you so!"

He lives in one incessant state  
Of proving all the acts of fate—  
Explained with clearness long ago,  
When, just as now, "he told you so!"

He scented Smith's financial crash;  
He saw the Traders' Bank would smash;  
And as for stocks declining low,  
Why, six week since, he "told us so!"

When Dobb's decamped with Dobbins's  
spouse  
He failed to raise astonished brows;  
When old Miss Prudley found a beau,  
He softly sighed, "I told you so!"

If I informed him, some fine day,  
There'd been an earthquake in Bombay,  
Or that the Hudson ceased to flow,  
He'd surely smile: "I told you so!"

Straight in his face ere long I'll shout:  
"You're quite the biggest humbug out!"  
And then, perchance, he may forego,  
Once in his life, "I told you so!"

If one always take a short cut through  
Life they sometimes regret they did not go  
The roundabout way.





## Wonders of Face . . Transformation.

EVERY year thousands of new books are published. They are read and forgotten. But once in a hundred years a new book appears which THE WORLD IS WAITING FOR. It contains some new truths which alters the history of mankind. Such a book has been issued, and is pronounced by the Press to be the most remarkable work of the century. You will read it. If not to-day, then some other day, for sooner or later it will be read by all men and all women. And when you have read it your life will be altered. It will become better, happier, more joyous. The writer of the book is Professor Boyd Laynard, who is now recognised as the greatest living authority on personal hygiene. The name of the book is "SECRETS OF BEAUTY, HEALTH AND LONG LIFE." Its sale is rapidly approaching

**ONE MILLION**

copies.

"Secrets of Beauty, Health, and Long Life," is no misnomer respecting the title of this extraordinary work. The author has unfolded to the world many secrets regarding these subjects, the importance of which it is impossible to over-estimate. The work, however, has not been written for the purpose of startling the reader with remarkable theories, but as a practical hand-book for all those desiring good looks, health and long life.

The publishers have issued a popular edition, at a price within the reach of all, so that the book may find a place in every home. The work is arranged in 127 chapters, the whole of which (in the popular edition now offered to the public) is bound in one volume. The book, although published at Two shillings, will, if ordered direct from the Publishers, be forwarded to readers of THE LONDON READER, carriage paid, at the low discount price of

**ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE.**

Among the numerous subjects dealt with, the following are but few. A complete syllabus, showing the contents of the whole of the **127 CHAPTERS**, enumerating upwards of **500 SUBJECTS** and divisions of subjects, can be had free on application to the Publishers.—

The way we make our own faces—Secrets of face transformation—Changeableness of beauty and its causes—Some strange facts concerning the variableness of beauty—"Odd-faced" beauty—The countenance the counterpart of the mind—How pleasing expressions become permanent—How a person's habitual look is acquired—How permanent expressions can be transformed—Metaphysical secrets of keeping young and preserving a youthful appearance—The author's investigations into the causes why some individuals look younger than others at a certain age—Discovery of a great metaphysical secret—Wonders of the skin—Effects of mental emotions upon the skin—Bad complexions and their causes—Diet that spoils and diet that improves the complexion—General care of the complexion—Construction, growth, and wonders of the hair—Why hair falls out—Premature greyness: its causes and prevention—General care of the hair—Superfluous hairs and how to treat them—Wrinkles: their prevention and treatment—Freckles, tan, and blackheads—Oily skin, dry skin, and loose skin—How the nose can be improved—Protruding ears and their treatment—Offensive breath—Anatomy of the teeth—Why teeth decay—General care of the teeth—Tallness, and how to attain it—Round shoulders, and how to cure them—How to acquire a full chest—Perfect form and figure: their proper proportions—Thinness and its treatment—Excessive stoutness—Care of the hands—Care of the feet—Physiognomy: or the art of reading character from the face—Mental influences upon health—Power of the mind over the body—Influence of the mind in curing diseases—How the mind can cause dyspepsia—Effect of the direction of thought to the heart—How real diseases often supervene upon fancied ailments—How violent passions injure health—Laughter as a medicine—Ailments cured by laughter—Wonders of digestion—Relative value to our bodies of the principal articles of food—Fruits and vegetables as medicine: their various influences upon the physical system—Health-preserving diet and its consistency—Diet favourable to mental exertion and intellectual culture—Influence of various foods upon our passions and propensities—The influence exerted by the mind upon the appetite and digestion—Some perilous articles of food—Exercise, and its relation to health—Baths and bathing: their influence upon health—The way we breathe, and how it affects our health—The marriage state, and its influence upon health—Statistics showing the comparative vitality of married and single persons—Too professions, trades, and occupations: their respective influences upon health and long life—Sleep, and its relation to health—Insomnia and its treatment—The eyes, and how to preserve them—The ears and hearing: how to prevent deafness—The voice: its cultivation and preservation—Memory, and how to improve it—Sudden failure of memory—Rules for cultivating the memory—Influence of diet upon memory—Stammering, and how to cure it—Prevention of disease—Nervousness—Blushing: its physiology and treatment—Rules of life for attaining longevity—Compendium of the mental, moral, physical, and external influences that lessen the years of our earthly existence—How to live to a hundred—Premature old age and its causes—Short biographies of 30 modern centenarians, whose ages range from 115 to 118 years—General principles that can be laid down for the anticipation of longevity—The eight signs of long life.

**ORDER FORM. 697262**

To HAMMOND, HAMMOND & Co.,  
19, 21, and 23, Ludgate Hill, London.

Please forward me Professor Boyd Laynard's complete work, "SECRETS OF BEAUTY, HEALTH, AND LONG LIFE" (carriage paid), for which I enclose the sum of

**ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE.**

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

## A Romance of Entrancing Interest

Our readers will be pleased to learn that next week we shall commence a story by the author of that popular novel, "Unseen Fires," suggestively entitled

## Woman against Woman

By Effie Adelaide Rowlands

Author of "Flower of Fate," "Unseen Fires," &c., &c.

The opening scenes occur in Ostend, and the atmosphere of that favourite watering place is reproduced with graceful and artistic touches, and proves an attractive setting for the

## Vivid and Picturesque Incidents

which from the start interest and charm the reader.

An adventurous young Briton, romantically discovers a prepossessing maiden in a position of extreme peril, and soon after learns that she is harassed and threatened by an audacious and

## Unscrupulous Foe.

At once his chivalry is aroused, and impulsively he becomes her protector, utterly regardless of his own safety, indifferent to the enmity he arouses, but determined to do his utmost to prove that he is worthy of being considered

## Her Champion.

A well-planned plot connects the animated and exciting incidents, and from the opening scene to the artistic denouement, there is an unceasing succession of extraordinary occurrences, which are presented with such graphic skill and captivating earnestness that the entranced reader eagerly hurries from page to page, his curiosity ever on the alert, in delightful anticipation of each successive tableau.

The first instalment of EFFIE ADELAIDE ROWLAND'S Story will appear in our next issue.

See that you get the Supplement Novelette with this No.

# THE CURSE OF LENNOX COURT.

By the Author of "A Golden Destiny," "The Mistress of Lynwood," &c.

[A NOVELETTE.]

COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE FORTUNE-TELLER'S PROPHECY.



**A** YOUNG man raised the blind of his sitting-room in Piccadilly, in order to watch the men and women on the pavement below. He dropped it with a mocking laugh, and walked over to the fireplace, where he stood with his arm on the chimney, while his handsome blue eyes glanced round the room, with its pictures and china, its luxurious easy chairs, its Persian rugs, and flowers in tall Venetian vases. The contrast between inside and outside struck him, but what struck him still more was the contrast between the luxury suggested by his surroundings and the actual bitter poverty he was in reality called upon to confront. For Godfrey Lennox was a ruined man, his credit was pledged to its extreme limit, the half-sovereign in his pocket was all that stood between him and actual starvation. He had no one but himself to blame for the position—so he told himself—and he had known for some time that the crash must inevitably come sooner or later. Through certain rash speculations, it had come sooner, and now what he had to do was to face it.

He thought it all out as he stood staring down into the glowing heart of the fire; he tried to imagine a future, but it was no good—it all came back to the same old dogma, "I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed!" He was nearly thirty, and all his life he had been the spoilt darling of fortune; he knew no business save that of spending money, no profession save that of pleasure—how, then, was it likely that he could begin a new life on utterly unknown lines?

No, there was only one resource for him—and he drew from his pocket a small silver-mounted revolver, and, smiling grimly, laid it on the shelf before him, where he contemplated it for some time in silence. Then he took it up, and examined it. It was already loaded in its four chambers; he pressed its muzzle against his forehead.

How deadly cold it was; a shiver ran through him, and he lowered it till it was level with the upper portion of his left breast.

"It's more certain through the heart than through the head," he muttered, "but I must make sure I aim correctly. It would never do to fail at the last."

He poised it very carefully, and with a perfectly steady hand. Whatever his faults may have been, cowardice certainly did not rank among them. Quite suddenly there came from below the sweet clear treble of a boy's voice singing a Christmas carol:—

"Peace on earth, goodwill towards men."

Godfrey's fingers unconsciously unclasped their hold, as the familiar notes floated upwards, detaching themselves from the roar and bustle of the London streets, and taking him back to his childhood, when he himself had sang the self-same words, standing at his mother's knees. Ah, if his mother had but lived! How different everything might have been.

He took her miniature from his pocket, and look at it earnestly. The sweet eyes, gazing back at him, seemed to wear an expression of reproach—or at least, his fancy interpreted it so, and raising the likeness to his lips, he kissed it passionately, while

the boy's pure voice still thrilled through the night.

Everything had suddenly changed—his purpose seemed somehow different, and less imperative. Not that, for one moment, he abandoned it—it was the only alternative left him, and he intended carrying it through, but it should wait for awhile, and in the meantime, he would give the singer part of that last ten shillings of his.

He tossed half-a-crown through the window, and as he came back to his former position, his eyes fell on a card of invitation, bearing this very date. He had forgotten all about Lady Newton's party, and the fact that he had promised to attend it.

"I may as well keep my engagements—this will be the last!" he said with a mirthless laugh, and he walked to the adjoining room and changed his clothes for regulation evening dress. After that, he went downstairs and hailed a cab, which rapidly bore him to the smart house in P— Street, which was his destination. And all the while, a mocking voice was whispering in his ear, "The last time, the last time!" He tried to still it, but without success—it even followed him to the reception rooms, with their lovely decorations of palms and rare exotics, it mocked him as he greeted his hostess, and came between him and the new beauty, Miss Bowering, who received him with her most gracious smile, and even chided him for his tardy arrival.

Most men would have been immensely flattered at her tone and manner, but Godfrey was beyond that. He was wondering what she and the others would say in the morning when they read in the papers an account of his suicide—how long they would think of it, and what effect it would have on their pleasures.

The voice of Miss Bowering broke on his musings,—

"Have you seen the gipsy fortune-teller—palmist, she calls herself? No? Oh, then, you must do so without delay. She's perfectly wonderful, I assure you. Tells you all the future and all the past."

"She'll be clever if she tells me my future," he returned, with an enigmatic smile.

"She is clever, astonishingly clever. I never was so amazed in all my life as at the things she said to me. You may laugh and look incredulous, but they were really true. Do go and judge for yourself. Stay; I'll show you where her cave is."

She rose and led the way through the brilliantly-lighted rooms to one at the end of the suite, before whose entrance hung a heavy velvet curtain.

Outside it a dozen people were waiting, laughing and joking the while, and making bets as to what would be told them.

Evidently the palmist was a very popular institution, and Lady Newton was to be congratulated on the success of her idea of engaging her.

Listlessly enough Godfrey waited until his turn came, chatting the while with the society beauty, who, for some reason or other, seemed to take a special interest in him to-night.

At length the crowd thinned off, and the last visitor to the palmist came out, looking, if the truth must be told, as if he had had rather a bad quarter of an hour.

"Now it's your turn," whispered Miss Bowering, giving him a gentle little push in the direction of the cave; "and when you

come away, be sure to tell me what the gipsy says."

Godfrey pushed the curtain on one side, and found himself in a small room, that, by the aid of simulated rocks and shrubs, had been made to look like a cavern. At the farther end of it sat a weird-looking figure dressed in brown homespun, and a scarlet cloak, the hood of which was drawn round her head, partly concealing the face, about which fell a quantity of grey elfin locks. Through them her eyes gleamed black and bright, like jewels, and as they fastened themselves on Godfrey, and she took his white hand in her brown one, he felt a queer little thrill of half superstitious terror steal through his veins.

She studied the lines on his palm very attentively before she spoke.

"I see trouble," she muttered, half to herself. "In the past there is youth and joy, and pleasure, but the reckoning has come, and payment is demanded. I see the shadow of the angel Azrael, even Him who is called the Angel of Death. He is hovering near, but the shadow will not fall yet; the Angel will depart."

She lifted her eyes suddenly, and they met his.

"You are on the eve of crime, but Heaven is still merciful, and between the thought and the act is a great gulf fixed, which shall not be spanned. Retribution shall be demanded of you, but not yet—not yet. Go home, rest, sleep, and with the dawn fortune shall come. I have spoken."

She dropped his hand and made a gesture of dismissal, which, however, he did not feel inclined to obey.

Amazed and half bewildered as he was by her words, his curiosity was powerfully awakened, and he felt he could not tear himself away until he had endeavoured to test still further the mysterious knowledge she had displayed of his life, and, more than that, his thoughts.

"Can't you tell me more?" he asked.

"Be satisfied. You have surely heard enough."

"No. I would still hear more."

"Of past or future?"

"Which you will."

Once again she took his hand and bent over the palm.

"The curtain of the past is lifted," she said, very slowly. "I see a great wrong done by one kinsman to another. I see an innocent person bearing the burden of a guilty one. I see a father's heart alienated, and a heritage diverted from its rightful owner, and I see the sins of the parents visited on the children. The debt shall be paid—yes, to the uttermost farthing, and yours shall be the hand to render its back. Go now, and when these things shall come to pass, remember that the gipsy has spoken what the stars revealed to her."

"Well," exclaimed Miss Bowering, breathlessly, as he came from behind the curtain and joined her. "Has she told you anything very marvellous?"

"She has, indeed," he returned, and, as he spoke, he drew a deep breath. "So marvellous that I cannot imagine where she gets her knowledge from."

"Ah!" smiling triumphantly; "you see I was right after all. You were inclined to be sceptical before you went in."

"I was, but I am sceptical no longer."

She looked at him rather wistfully. She would have liked to inquire the nature of the communication that had passed between him and the palmist; but something in his face held her back, and Godfrey, on his parts, volunteered no information—indeed, in a very short time, he said "good-bye" to his hostess, and contrived to slip out unnoticed in the crowd.

He walked back to his room, and in the

Next Week another Serial Story begins.





"WELL," EXCLAIMED MISS BOWERING, BREATHLESSLY; "HAS SHE TOLD YOU ANYTHING VERY MARVELLOUS?"

open air, with the fresh night breezes blowing on his heated temples, the half superstitious terrors that had beset him seemed to vanish, and he began asking himself where Sibyl could have got her knowledge concerning him. It struck him that Lady Newton might have supplied her with it, but on second thoughts he rejected this idea, for it would have been quite impossible for the hostess to give even an outline of the histories of her hundred guests—supposing she herself knew them. Besides, the palmist had hinted at things which Lady Newton could not possibly have known—things that had happened in the past, and of which Lennox himself had only a hazy remembrance. He knew there had been an episode in the life of his grandfather which would not bear too strict an investigation—some question of unduly influencing; a will which left a large property to him, while the name of the rightful heir was not so much as mentioned.

The property in question, Lennox Court, now belonged to Godfrey's uncle, James Lennox, between whom and himself, a deadly fear existed, dating back to a certain quarrel that had taken place between them when the young man came of age. To understand the irrevocable nature of that quarrel, it is only necessary to say that in all his difficulties, Godfrey had never once thought of appealing to his uncle for help, knowing perfectly well that there was not the very remotest chance of its being given him.

For his sitting-room, the lights were turned down, and everything remained exactly as he had left it. He started slightly as he reached the mantelpiece, and saw, lying upon it, the little silver mounted revolver. It recalled to him his resolution, which, for the moment, he had well-nigh

forgotten, and he stood, for a little while, irresolute, the deadly toy in his hand, wondering whether he should make use of it now, or take the gipsy's advice, and wait till the morning.

"Fortune will come with the dawn," she had said, and though Godfrey laughed at himself, he could not get rid of a certain amount of faith in her. Of course, her prophecy was all nonsense, but at any rate, he would give her a chance—he would wait till the morning.

## CHAPTER II.

### WHAT THE MORNING BROUGHT.

It was very little sleep Godfrey Lennox got that night. Contrary to his usual custom, he tossed restlessly about the pillows, haunted by those bright blackeyes that had looked into his and read his secrets. Even now, he could feel the touch of Sibyl's warm, brown fingers, he could see the elfin locks, he could hear the low sibilant voice, that had prophesied such strange things.

In the morning he listened eagerly for the postman's knock, but though he heard it at other doors, it passed by his own, and then his heart sank curiously. Somehow, he had pinned his hopes on the morning's letters, and now that none had come, his faith in the gipsy waned more and more. All she had said was mere guess-work on her part—he was a fool to have placed any credence in it.

He got up and put on his dressing-gown, then he dotted down a few rough memoranda with regard to certain articles of no special value—books and prints—which he wished his old friend Lindsey to have. Lindsey was away in South Africa now, but

he would like, when he heard of his former comrades death, to know that he had remembered him.

The memoranda finished, he sealed them, placed the envelope in a conspicuous position, and took up the revolver. At the same moment a loud knock came at the door, and a second later, it was opened by no less a person than Mr. Bennett, his father's old solicitor, whose sharp eyes glanced rapidly round, and took in every detail of the scene—the handsome, hollow-eyed young man, the letter before him, and the revolver that he still held between his fingers.

"Good morning, Mr. Godfrey—you're up earlier than usual, aren't you? Going to have a little revolver practice, eh? Well, it's an interesting experiment, but I'll get you to defer it for a while, if you don't mind. Whose make is that pretty little toy—Smith and Wesson? Ah, I thought so," as he quietly took the weapon from the young man's grasp—"and loaded too! Permit me to take the cartridges out. I'm rather a nervous man, and I shall feel more at ease when I know there's no danger of an accident."

Godfrey watched him in silence while he carefully abstracted the charge, and afterwards laid the revolver by his side. He was a short stout man, clean shaven, and with piercing grey eyes. His manner had a certain business-like alertness that hinted at his legal profession. He had known Godfrey from boyhood, and he knew, too, how hopelessly involved his affairs had become. He was also perfectly aware that if he had arrived ten minutes later, he would have been too late.

"Prepare yourself for a surprise, and a pleasant one—though, perhaps, I ought hardly to say that, as the first intelligence

WOMAN AGAINST WOMAN is by Effie Adelaide Rowlands.

I have to give you is, that your uncle James is dead."

The young man raised his head, quickly, "My uncle James, dead! It must have been rather sudden."

"It was very sudden—the result of an accident. He was out for a ride, and his horse became frightened, and ran away. In the madness of his terror, he went straight down the bank into the river, threw his rider, and both were drowned."

"Well," said Godfrey, after a pause, "I am sorry he met his end in such a fashion; although, I can't pretend to much grief. I suppose he has made a will, and left all his money to his widow?"

"No. He has made a will, and left all his money to you."

"To me!" the young man almost shouted, and he sprang from his chair in his amazement.

The lawyer nodded assent.

"To you, on condition that you always live at the Court, and, after your death, to his widow. A queer will, isn't it? But then your uncle was a queer man."

Godfrey did not speak for a few minutes. This, then, was the "fortune that came with the dawn."

"If the old man has left me his property it was with some evil intention," he said at length, with conviction. "His last wish would be to benefit me."

Mr. Bennett shrugged his shoulders.

"That may be; still, the result is the same—you are master of Lennox Court. My own opinion is that he wished to spite his wife, with whom he seems to have been on bad terms, though they have only been married two years. I expect she is pretty savage, considering that she married him entirely for his money. Here is a letter that the solicitors down in Warwickshire forwarded to me to give you. Perhaps it may explain something of the mystery."

Godfrey took the blue envelope, the direction of which was in his uncle's handwriting, and tore it open, eagerly glancing at the signature, which was that of "James Lennox."

The contents of the epistle were brief, and ran as follows,—

"NEPHEW GODFREY,—

"You may be surprised to learn after my death—for in the ordinary course of nature you will out-live me—that I have made you my heir. Do not imagine that I have done this out of any sense of your claims to the Lennox estate, or because you are my dear brother's son. I have no wish to mince matters, and there is no love lost between us. I bequeath you my estate because—a curse goes with it! My father got it by fraud, and so long as his descendants have it so long will the curse remain. A woman, in the madness of despair, pronounced that curse before she took her own life, and prophesied that, until the wrong was righted, no master of Lennox Court should die other than a violent death. That prophecy was fulfilled in my father's case, and likely enough it will be in my own—your turn will come, and the thought of it shall hang over you like the sword that a touch may bring down. Your life will be a misery to you, even as mine has been; and when you next set foot within Lennox Court, your doom is sealed!

"JAMES LENNOX."

Godfrey shivered violently, as he handed the letter to the solicitor. There was something in its deadly venom, its cold calculating menace that struck a chill to his heart. Once, indeed, he thought he would refuse to accept heritage to which such conditions were attached.

The lawyer folded up the document, and placed it in its envelope again.

"A very pretty epistle, upon my soul! The old man must have been half mad to write such nonsense. Fortunately, in these days of civilisation, we have got beyond belief in curses and all that sort of rubbish, and nothing that he says affects the value of the estate. Ten thousand a year—not a penny less! You may consider yourself very lucky, Mr. Godfrey Lennox, and the sooner you go down and take possession of the estate, the better. I have brought with me a copy of the will, which I will leave with you, and by it you will see that the widow has a small annuity, and is to keep a suite of apartments at the Court for her life. That is rather a nuisance; I can only hope that you and she will hit it off together. Have you ever seen her?"

"Never; but I know she was a good deal younger than her husband, and is supposed to be handsome."

The lawyer rubbed his chin reflectively. It is quite possible he saw complications ahead, but he was wise in his generation, and made no mention of them. After a little more talk, confined to strictly business details, he rose to leave.

"And so I may write and say it is arranged you go down to Lennox Court next week, and, meanwhile, I'll see that all necessary legal formalities are complied with. May I ask a favour of you, Mr. Godfrey?"

"Certainly."

"Then make me a present of that little revolver. It is a pretty toy, and I have taken rather a fancy to it. Besides, if I judge aright, you have no further use for it."

Without a word, Godfrey handed it to him.

### CHAPTER III.

#### HOW GODFREY TOOK POSSESSION.

It was Christmas Eve, and Godfrey Lennox sat in a first-class smoking compartment, clad in a costly fur-lined coat, and with a choice Havannah between his lips, while the great steam monster whirled him through the ice-bound landscape in the direction of his new home.

At last his destination was reached—a little country station, deserted save for one or two porters and a servant in livery, who waited to look after the luggage of his fresh master.

Godfrey sprang out and looked around him. It was about half-past three in the afternoon, and already the early winter dusk was setting in. The station seemed to have been plumped down in the very midst of country solitude, not a house or even a chimney was visible from it, and the horizon was shut out by fur-crowned hills, which stood up in dark and solemn outline against the crimson sky, where the sun—a rayless copper ball—was fast sinking from view.

"No more luggage, Sir?" said the footman. "Then please to follow me."

Godfrey obeyed, and found a carriage and pair of high stepping bays waiting outside. Presently he was being driven along a desolate country road, bordered on one side by meadow land, and on the other by a forest of oak and beech, where a few withered leaves still hung on the boughs, as a reminder of the vanished summer. To his surprise the carriage proceeded very slowly—he had thought from the look of the horses that they would dash along at a splendid pace, and wondering at the reason, he put his head out of the carriage window, and then discovered that the animal on the off side was lame.

As he was on the point of drawing his head back he caught sight of a figure emerging from the road that caused a little cry of

astonishment to fall from his lips. It was a bent old woman dressed in a homespun gown and a red mantle, whose hood was drawn over her grey head. For a moment Godfrey thought he was the victim of an hallucination; his mind had dwelt so much on the strange fortuneteller that imagination had conjured her image before him. But no! The figure was very real, and there was no doubting her identity when she put up her fingers to her lips, as a sign to him to make no movements.

Considerably mystified he remained quiescent, while she nimbly ran to the back of the carriage, and in a minute later opened the door and stepped in. Her proceedings had been characterised by such silence and swiftness that the coachman and footman in front had not the least idea of her presence.

She had seated herself with her back to the horses, and having done so, she motioned the young man to her side. As he obeyed her she leaned forward and took up his coat, which, feeling too hot, he had thrown off, and set it up in the corner he had just vacated.

"Have you a stick and a travelling cap?" she whispered.

More and more amazed he gave her the articles she mentioned, and she thereupon pushed the stick inside the coat and placed on it the cap. Seen thus, in the dusk, the bundle of clothes had every appearance of a man's figure.

"What does this mean?" he began, but she interrupted him quickly.

"Hush! You will understand later on. You may trust me. I am your friend." And then she relapsed into complete silence, though Godfrey saw that her eyes roved sharply from side to side, and every nerve in her body seemed to be on the alert. Once he felt a quick shiver run through her.

Up to the present Godfrey had had the ordinary human experience, which leaves no margin for supernatural things; but now it seemed to him he had gone outside that experience, for surely nothing so strange and bewildering had ever befallen mortal man before! His heart beat quickly and thickly, the woman's excitement communicated itself to him. He waited with an apprehensive dread of what might come next. And meanwhile the shadows deepened outside, the red sun had disappeared, the tops of the Scotch firs were more darkly silhouetted against the sky, while above the tallest of them a young crescent moon showed like a thin arc of purest silver.

Quite suddenly there came a flash through the darkness and a loud report, and the dummy figure in the corner collapsed, while the bullet that had pierced it embedded itself in the padding of the cushions.

Instantly the frightened horses began to rear, the coachman had much ado to hold them in, and it was not until they had gone some little distance that he was able to pull up, and see what was the matter.

"You are safe now—say nothing of my presence here," muttered the gipsy, in a low whisper, and before Godfrey quite realised the meaning of the words, she had slipped out, and disappeared—on the opposite side from that whence the shot had come.

All this had happened so quickly that the young man fancied he would have no difficulty in tracing the miscreants who had fired. He sprang out of the carriage, and hastened back to the spot, but there was no sign of human presence; he plunged into the thicket of trees, only to be met with a wild tangle of undergrowth that, in this semi obscurity, entirely barred his progress. Angry and bewildered, he turned back, and began questioning the servants, who were pale and frightened.



They could give him no information, for beyond hearing the shot, they knew nothing at all of the circumstances. It is true the coachman fancied that when he looked round he saw the figure of a man disappearing in the thicket, but the glimpse he obtained had been so momentary that he could give no description of him; and, of course, no guess as to his identity. Of the fortune-teller neither he nor his companion knew anything at all.

The only thing left for Godfrey was to jump into the carriage again, and tell the coachman to drive homewards as quickly as he could. He seated himself with his back to the horses, in the position assigned him by the woman, and his brain was in a busy whirl as he tried to puzzle out the mystery of the last half-hour. Clearly an attempt had been made against his life, and it would have been successful if he had remained seated as he was before the gipsy entered. That she was aware the attempt would be made, and intended to frustrate it, he did not doubt—but how did she know it, and why should she take such an interest in his welfare?

He could give no answer to these questions, and they were still perplexing him when the carriage drew up in front of a large gabled house, half covered in ivy, and shadowed by a huge cedar. The door was of oak, with thick cut nails studded over it, and a long hanging bell of rusty iron on one side, the windows were set in heavy stone mullions, but the characteristics that struck one most was the sombre gloom that seemed to hang about the place—partly due to the ivy and thick cedar branches, and partly to the shutters that were fastened over the windows, excluding ever glimmer of light.

The new heir hardly expected his uncle's widow to welcome him on the threshold, but he was not prepared for such a general darkness, and when he gave a sharp pull at the bell, and waited while the clangour echoed through the long passages, he was wondering what sort of a life his would be in this cheerless mansion.

A few minutes later the door was thrown open by a tall portly man, whom Godfrey rightly judged to be the butler, and then he was ushered into the drawing-room, which was brilliantly lighted by wax candles. He had not to wait long before there entered a young girl, slight and slim, dressed in black, and with dark eyes and hair—a pretty girl, though she was apparently shy and ill at ease. When she spoke she seemed to be speaking a lesson by note.

"Mrs. Lennox has sent me to ask you to excuse her until dinner-time—she has a headache, and is lying down. I am her companion, and my name is Lena Selwin. Mrs. Lennox said I was to ask you if you would like some tea?"

Godfrey said he should; it was still some time to dinner, and his journey had made him thirsty. Accordingly, the tray was brought in, and Miss Selwin sat down in front of it, with the young man opposite to her.

In a little while the ice of her reserve seemed in process of thawing. Godfrey had never found it difficult to make himself agreeable to the fair sex, and although on this occasion he hardly did himself justice, for he was naturally a good deal upset by the events of the afternoon, he still contrived to pierce through the armour of shyness in which the young girl at first seemed inclined to wrap herself. He found she had held her present situation for nearly six months, and that her duties consisted in reading aloud to Mrs. Lennox, writing her letters, and driving her out in the pony carriage.

"But I should have thought Mrs. Lennox

would have liked doing all these things herself," observed Godfrey.

"She cannot. She had an accident to her right hand, and, in consequence, she can't use it at all. Perhaps it may come right in time, but the doctors are not very hopeful."

Their *titic-a-tit* was interrupted by the entrance of the butler, who came to conduct the new squire to his rooms. So far, he had made no mention of the shooting affair, but he could see from the inquisitive looks cast upon him by the man that the other servants had not been equally reticent; indeed, as a matter of fact, the servants' hall was in a great state of commotion over the sensational episode.

Godfrey lingered over his toilet, and the gong sounded before he descended. In the drawing-room he found his uncle's widow, but with no sign of widowhood about her. She was a tall, fair, stately woman of about thirty, dressed with great care in a gown of rich violet velvet, embellished with costly old lace. Her neck was bare, and gleamed whitely in the light of the candles. In her piled-up golden hair was shot a diamond-hilted dagger.

She came forward and held out her hand, smiling, and showing two rows of pearly teeth.

"I suppose, if we were like the people in the woods, we ought to be sworn foes," she said, "but in real life enmity is as difficult to keep up as it is ridiculous, and my opinion is that our wisest plan is to bury the hatchet and make the best of things. What do you say?"

"I entirely agree with you," he answered, bowing over the dimpled white hand—it was her left one—on whose fingers scintillated the starry radiance of diamonds, "and I think it very good of you to greet me so kindly."

"You are easily satisfied; but, after all, it is not your fault that matters have fallen out in such a curious way, and, in spite of my sex, I assure you I have a certain amount of common-sense, and have not the least intention of blaming you for your uncle's desire that you should have his wealth. Of course I would rather have had it myself, but perhaps you have the greatest right to it, and my little annuity will suffice for my wants. All my life I have endeavoured to look on the bright side of things, and that happy faculty has not deserted me yet. Now give me your arm, and we will go to dinner."

He obeyed, and they went in, followed by Miss Selwin, who, in her black dress, formed a great contrast to the handsome mistress of the house, in her rich-hued garments.

Once or twice during the meal Godfrey found the companion's eyes fixed on his face with a singular expression of earnestness and inquiry, but the minute they encountered his they were hastily withdrawn.

Mrs. Lennox was evidently determined to set the young man quite at his ease, and laughed and chatted gaily, not at all like a recently-bereaved widow.

When the servants had withdrawn, and she had helped herself to port wine before passing it round, she saw Godfrey's glance fixed on her dress, and she answered the unspoken question his eyes suggested,—

"You observe I am not in morning, as, perhaps, you think I ought to be, but I am no hypocrite, and I will not pretend a sorrow I do not feel. People will, no doubt, say all sorts of unpleasant things because I refuse to array myself in sombre black and hideous weepers. They may say exactly what they please. Thank Heaven, I am above caring for such conventions."

This bold avowal, it must be admitted,

somewhat startled Godfrey, but he was inclined to admire her plain-spokenness all the same. Indeed, he was inclined to admire her altogether, for there could be no doubt that she was an extremely handsome woman, of that type which takes captive men's senses, if not their hearts.

Now that they were free from the presence of the servants he thought it a good opportunity for relating his adventures of the afternoon, to which his companion listened in startled silence.

"I cannot understand it all," observed Mrs. Lennox, after a pause. "It is true, we have had poachers about the place occasionally, but such a mysterious occurrence has never happened in the neighbourhood before. Did not you even catch a glimpse of your supposed assailant?"

"No. I was so startled that for a minute my wits deserted me, and when I looked out of the carriage-window there was no sign of the man."

"It may not have been a man," put in Miss Selwin; but Godfrey felt bound to disagree with her.

"Oh, yes, I think so; and more than that, it was a man who was a first-rate marksman, for you must remember that the carriage was in motion, and he had to aim through the window."

"Which was open, I suppose?"

"Yes, it was open. I am fond of plenty of air, and I never like a window shut if I can help it. I always sleep with my window open, even in the dead of winter."

"What shall you do in the matter?" asked Mrs. Lennox, desisting in her occupation of peeling a grape, and bending forward a little.

"Communicate with the county police, and leave the matter in their hands."

"Yes," she said, slowly, "I should think that would be the best thing; but I am afraid they will not be able to render you much assistance, seeing that you have no clue whatever to the man who fired the shot, which, I suppose, is still in the carriage cushion?"

"I suppose so."

"It was lucky for you you chanced to be on the other side."

"Very. If I hadn't changed my place I should have been a dead man now."

"What made you change your place?"

"Fancy," he rejoined, shortly, for he intended to respect the gipsy's injunction of silence; "or, shall we say, Providence?"

Mrs. Lennox shrugged her shoulders by way of reply, but made no further comment, and soon afterwards they all adjourned to the drawing-room.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### MRS. LENNOX'S STORY.

THE sound of Christmas bells woke Godfrey the following morning, and he got up to see the trees and shrubs covered with a fresh snow-white mantle that glistened like diamonds beneath the wintry sunlight. The sky was blue and cloudless, the air crisp and frosty; there was no wind, and the rhythmic cadence of the chiming was clearly audible, although the church was some distance away.

Outside it was a typical Christmas morning, but indoors the gloom that had struck him on his arrival yesterday did not appear to have lightened, and when he went downstairs, it seemed to him that there was something damp and funereal in the very air. In the dining room he found Miss Selwin on her knees before the fire, trying to coax its blackness into a blaze.

"I think there must be something wrong with all the chimneys," she said, rising with a small smile of greeting. "There is

not one of them which 'draws' properly and as a result we never get a decent fire."

"Perhaps that partly accounts for the sense of depression the house gives one."

"So you have noticed that already?" she exclaimed, with some eagerness. "I too have observed it, but I sometimes wondered whether it was due to my imagination."

"Is your imagination in the habit of playing tricks with you then?" he asked, thinking to himself how pretty the girl looked in the clear morning light.

"I have a very vivid one," she answered, colouring slightly beneath his gaze. "But on the whole I am glad of it."

"Indeed! And why?"

"Because it makes my life brighter. You see I can always get out of the grim facts of reality into the Fairyland of Fancy by its aid."

"But reality ought not to be grim for you—young as you are."

She sighed rather wistfully, and clasped her slim hands together.

"Youth is no proof against sorrow, and—"

What she was on the point of adding it is impossible to say, but she broke off abruptly, and once more knelt down on the hearth-rug. "Oh, this tiresome fire! It seems determined to be as sulky as it can. And on Christmas morning, at least, one expects something more cheerful."

Godfrey took up the poker and began hammering away at a large piece of coal, which, however, did not omit the slightest symptom of a spark, then he rang the bell. It was answered by the butler, whose name was Rowley.

"Are't there such things as logs about the place? Go and see if you can't find one or two and bring them in."

His tone was one of authority, that of a master in fact, when he speaks in his own house. Not that he wished to give himself any airs, but only to assert his position.

As he spoke he was facing the fireplace, before him was a large oval mirror, and in it he saw the portly form of Rowley reflected. But there was something else the mirror gave back—the face of a woman who was standing behind the butler, and whose features, as he gave his orders, underwent a swift change. A perfect whirlwind of passion seemed to sweep across them, utterly transforming them. There was, indeed, something absolutely diabolical in their expression.

Godfrey turned round quickly, and was met by Mrs. Lennox, clad in a neat tailor-made gown that fitted her to perfection, and showed to fullest advantage the supple curves of her fine figure. Her face was tranquil, there was a smile on her lips, and Godfrey, utterly confounded, told himself the mirror had surely played him a trick.

"Shall I wish you both a merry Christmas?" she said gaily, as she came forward. "What a lovely morning, isn't it? I suppose, Miss Selwin, you will want to go to church?"

Miss Selwin confessed she should. "And you," turning to Godfrey, "what are your movements for this morning?"

"I should like to go to church as well, if you don't mind."

"Oh, I don't mind, so long as you don't ask me to accompany you. You and Miss Selwin can go together, only I warn you you must start in good time, for you will have a good half-hour's walk."

"All the better. This is a perfect morning for walking, providing one puts thick shoes on."

Mrs. Lennox was on the point of taking her seat at the head of the table when she suddenly paused and smiled.

"Oh, I forgot that I was no longer mistress of the Court, and I have no right to this place, except by your wish—" She spoke with perfect good humour, but he interrupted her quickly, and with some annoyance,—

"Pray don't say such things! My presence here need not make the smallest difference to you, at least, I hope it won't. You are mistress of the Court still, and will remain so."

"Until you marry? Very well, I accept your kindness, and will endeavour to repay it by showing you what a good housekeeper I am. Ah! here comes Rowley with the logs. I hope they'll make the fire burn up, but from the look of them I doubt it."

Her doubts proved well founded. The wood was green, and sputtered and hissed, but refused to blaze.

"When you have been here a little longer, you will learn how it is we never get a decent fire," observed Mrs. Lennox, a mysterious shade crossing her brow. "I am not particularly superstitious, but I do believe there is something uncanny about this house."

"I am inclined to agree with you," he rejoined, shortly.

She looked at him for a moment without speaking, then, lowering her voice, slightly she said,—

"Have you ever heard the history of the curse of Lennox Court?"

"I cannot say I have. I know something about it in a vague sort of way, but I should like to hear the story in all its details."

"I will tell it you—not that there is very much to tell. The chief actor in this was your grandfather—the father of my late husband, whose name was Cyrus Lennox. When he first came to the Court to make his home with his uncle, old Squire Philip, he was a penniless orphan, and it was only through the charity of that uncle, that he was brought up and educated. The squire was a widower with one daughter, named Lucy, whom he very naturally idolized. With this girl, Cyrus fell in love—or perhaps, it was with her fortune, anyhow, he proposed to her and was refused, and after that, he seems to have deliberately planned how best to revenge himself. A young artist named Cleveland, used to come to the Court to give Lucy lessons in drawing—he was handsome, and had a romantic history, and in the end, the young girl fell in love with him, and begged her father to consent to their marriage. He, instigated by Cyrus, who, even at the time, had gained a great influence over him, refused; and after a few more attempts to soften his resolution, Lucy and her artist lover eloped together. The wrath of the squire was deep enough, but it was fanned into a greater flame by Cyrus, who, with consummate art, contrived to keep father and daughter apart. Lucy made several efforts to obtain an interview with her father, but the doors of the Court were shut against her, and her letters were returned unopened—without, so the servants said afterwards, the squire being allowed to see them. His health and his mind was both failing; Cyrus never left him, and little by little, obtained a paramount influence over him.

Finally, the old man made a will, bequeathing everything to him, and not leaving so much as a penny piece to his daughter. Meanwhile, Lucy's husband had fallen ill, and was unable to follow his profession. The young couple became absolutely penniless, and a birth of a daughter added to their difficulties. After vain appeals to the squire, the artist died, his end being hastened by actual want, and then the poor wife, with her child in her arms, set out to walk to her former home, in order to make a final appeal to her father.

Once more it was refused, she was not permitted to see the squire, who was weak and ill, and who, Cyrus feared, might give way before the pathetic sight of her wretchedness.

Cyrus himself had an interview with her, and was overheard, using the most cruel taunts to her, and declaring that she and her baby might starve, before he would hold out a finger to help her.

"Indeed," he added. "The child looks already as if she were dead."

The poor mother, in frantic anxiety, bent over the little one, whose features, were blue and pinched, and the eyes closed. She pressed her hands against the baby's heart, but she could not feel it beating; and then a terrible thing happened—the wretched girl's mind gave way, and she rushed down to the pond there.

Mrs. Lennox pointed through the window to where a sheet of ice gleamed black against the snow—and threw herself in. But before doing this, she had turned to Cyrus and pronounced upon him a frightful curse, saying that his ill-gotten riches should bring no happiness, either to him or his descendants; and prophesying, that until the wrong he had done her had been righted, and the property yielded to its proper owner, not one of the masters of the Court should die a natural death.

For some time it seemed as if Cyrus could afford to despise her threats; he married, and had two sons, and things appeared to go well with him. Then a change came; his wife was smitten with a brain disease, which finally ended in madness, his sons were wild and disobedient, and openly defied him, and remorse at last seemed to lay its dread hand upon him. He was haunted, so he said, by the ghost of Lucy, which followed him night and day, and never gave him any peace, and one morning he was found hanging to a beam in the cellar, dead. So far, the prophecy was fulfilled. Then came my late husband's turn.

He was a miser, and the sort of life he led, you know as well as I can tell you—he quarrelled with all his relations, friends he had none, and finally, he was thrown from his horse and killed. You, Godfrey Lennox, are now the sole representative of the family, and it remains to be seen whether or no the curse follows you."

She had spoken with a certain solemnity that was decidedly impressive; as she ceased, she leaned back in the chair, and dropped her eyes moodily on the tablecloth.

It must be confessed. Godfrey had not listened to her tale unmoved. Her manner of telling it was as striking as the story itself was tragic, and a chill sense of foreboding crept over him as he continued. He was not master of this ill-gotten estate, and by keeping it, he, in a measure perpetuated his grandfather's crime. And yet, what could he do? Personally, he was innocent; and surely, the sins of his ancestors ought not to be visited on him!

Besides, there was no one else living who had so much right to the property as himself, so that, even if he gave it up, he would not be righting the wrong.

The sound of a heavy fall roused him and Mrs. Lennox. They both looked up quickly, and discovered that Lena Selwin lay stretched on the carpet in a dead faint.

## CHAPTER V.

### A MIDNIGHT TRYST.

WHEN, an hour or so later, Godfrey came out into the hall, dressed ready for church, he fully expected to have to go alone, but there was Miss Selwin awaiting him, arrayed in a tight-fitting, brown jacket, trimmed



with fur, and a small fur-bordered toque, that suited her mignonette beauty admirably. In her hand was a neat morocco case, containing prayer-book and hymn-book.

"Are you really sufficiently recovered to stand the walk?" he asked, dubiously, whereupon a bright colour flamed into her cheeks.

"I am quite well, I assure you," she rejoined, hurriedly. "I am sure I don't know what made me faint this morning—it is not often I give way to such weakness. But these last few weeks have tried my nerves a good deal. I think—the shock of the last squire's death, and the tragedy of it. . . ." She stopped herself with a slight shiver, and Godfrey had not the slightest wish to pursue the subject. He did not speak until they were out of the Court, then he looked back at it.

"That great cedar, which shadows the lower windows of the house, ought to come down," he said, decidedly. "It makes the whole place damp and gloomy. I can't think what my uncle was about not to have had it uprooted. Still, he was not a man very much given to cheerfulness, and perhaps that accounts for his omissions."

"He was the most unhappy man I ever knew," said Miss Selwin, in a low voice; "he cared for no one, he trusted no one. His whole life was one constant suspicion that people were trying in some way to cheat or get the better of him. I pitied him from my heart."

The Court cannot be a very bright home for you," observed Godfrey; "I wonder you have stayed so long."

A curious sort of shadow swept across her face.

"Beggars must not be choosers," she answered, a little bitterly. "I am entirely dependent on myself for my daily bread, and so long as I earn it honestly I must be content."

"Are you an orphan, then?"

"Yes." There was a certain finality in her tone which warned him not to continue his inquiries; but the knowledge of her apparently friendless condition deepened the interest with which Godfrey had begun to regard her. And as the day wore on, and he saw more of her—for Mrs. Lennox remained in her rooms during the afternoon, and the two young people were thrown upon each other for companionship—he came to the conclusion that her character was an interesting one, and would well repay study. She was no ordinary girl, just freed from the restraints of the school-room, but a quick, clever, and sensitive creature, who had already been called upon to face the hard facts of experience, and who had gathered wisdom from the stern realities against which it had been her lot to fight.

Neither was there anything coquettish about her, although her youth and her beauty might well have excused it. Life had been—and, indeed, was still—too serious a matter for her to indulge in those innocent arts by which most girls try to win masculine admiration. Once or twice Godfrey found her eyes fixed on him with the same intensity of expression he had noticed last night at dinner, and he smiled as he said,—

"You watch me as a cat watches a mouse. What does it mean?"

She blushed furiously, but gave him no other answer.

"Shall I tell you what your expression, and, indeed, your face altogether, reminds me of?" he went on, thinking how pretty that deep red flush made her look, "of a young lady whom I once saw at a public entertainment, and who claimed to be a clairvoyante."

Miss Selwin looked a little startled, and

her fingers twisted nervously in each other.

"You are not a clairvoyante, surely?" added Godfrey, half in jest, half in earnest.

To his surprise she answered quietly,—

"Not exactly that, perhaps; still, I think I see and feel things that ordinary mortals are unconscious of." But evidently she did not wish to give any further explanation, for, without offering an excuse, she slipped out of the room, and the young man was left alone.

The winter twilight was closing in, and the room, lighted only by the sullen glow of the fire, was full of gathering shadows. Outside the snow-laden branches and white landscape gleamed cold and ghostly under the faint rays of the young moon. Godfrey stood at the window for a few minutes looking out, and a curiously weird sense of loneliness and desolation fastened upon him, for which he could not account. Involuntarily he sighed, but what was his surprise and consternation when he distinctly heard his sigh re-echoed from behind!

Dropping the curtain, which he had been holding back, he glanced round the room, peering into the corners where the shadows gathered most thickly, but failing to see any token of living presence. No, he was apparently the sole occupant of that apartment, and yet a conviction seized him that he was not alone—that some ghostly presence was beside him whose misery had found expression in that deep sigh.

Godfrey was no coward, but he certainly did not enjoy the sensations that, in spite of himself, fastened upon him, and he rather hastily quitted the room. Outside in the great oak-raftered hall, a fire was burning, and the butler was in the act of lighting the swinging lamp. The new squire was in the mood for conversation, and Rowley was nothing loath to answer his questions.

"Upon my word," said the young man, "this is the quietest house I ever set foot in!"

This was especially true this afternoon, not a sound, not a whisper, broke on the ear. The silence within the Court was only matched by the snowy silence outside. The butler looked at his master rather curiously, and seemed to hesitate before he replied.

"You are right, sir," he said, at last. "It's about the loneliest place I ever served in. People say there's a spell on the house, and that—" he pulled himself up, remembering to whom he was speaking.

"Well?" said Godfrey, as he paused, "why don't you go on?"

"Perhaps you mightn't like it, sir?"

"Oh, you needn't be afraid of that. You may speak quite openly so far as I am concerned."

"Well, then, Christmas Day is the day the old squire—him as turned his daughter out of doors—died, and they do say his spirit walks. Why, sir, not one of the servants would go past the room in which he died, for any amount of money, after it has grown dark!"

"Which room is that?"

"The farthest in the corridor after you turn to your right on the landing. No one sleeps in that corridor now, and its generally kept locked. Your room, and Mrs. Lennox's and Miss Selwin's are on the opposite side of the house. It was about twelve o'clock at night the squire died, and every Christmas at midnight his spirit comes back. It seems as though he couldn't rest in his grave."

Rowley spoke quite seriously, and evidently in perfectly good faith, and though at any other time Godfrey might have laughed at him, he was not in the least inclined to do so now. In point of fact, the

chill of the house seemed to have laid its icy hand upon him. He tried his best to shake it off, but it was stronger than his endeavours. He began to think that, after all, the heritage his uncle had left him might be purchased too dearly at the sacrifice of living always at the Court.

Mrs. Lennox appeared at dinner, but she was silent and pre-occupied. Neither did Miss Selwin seem in the best of spirits, and altogether the meal was extremely dull. It is to be feared, after the ladies had left him to smoke his cigar, Godfrey drank rather more than he need have done, in an endeavour to chase away the depression that had taken such a hold on him. When he went to the drawing-room it struck him that Lena Selwin made an effort to avoid him, for fear, perhaps, lest he should renew the conversation that her sudden departure in the afternoon had broken off. Her conduct piqued him, for already he had begun to take a considerable amount of interest in her.

The ladies retired to rest early, but Godfrey did not feel sleepy; moreover, a plan was slowly taking shape in his mind which he resolved to put into effect—it was nothing more nor less than to visit the room in which Lucy Lennox's father had died, and test for himself the truth of Rowley's story.

Accordingly, when the butler came in to turn out the lights, he told him he would do it himself, and added that the servants were not to sit up for him, as it was quite possible he might be late. After that he waited until the clock pointed to a quarter to twelve, and then, turning out the lamp, he cautiously made his way upstairs in the dark—first of all removing his slippers, so that his footsteps should make no echo on the polished oak boards.

On the landing he paused. It was very dark and very silent. Down below, in the hall, he heard the great eight-day clock ticking, but beyond that there was not a sound. Quietly, and with a heart that beat rather faster than usual, he stole along the corridor, which had that musty, disused smell which generally haunts rooms that are left long unoccupied.

The old squire's chamber was at the very end of the corridor, so Rowley had said, and Godfrey, on reaching it, stood still for a moment, somewhat astonished to find the door slightly ajar.

Still more astonished was he when the faint echo of voices came to him, evidently from within. He could distinguish no words, for the tone was so low as to amount almost to a whisper; but in spite of that he knew at once that the voices belonged to a man and to a woman.

After a slight hesitation he pushed the door wider open, and went inside. The starlight coming through the unshuttered windows showed him a wide room, somewhat bare of furniture, and at one end a man and a woman. His arms were round her and her head rested on his shoulder. Unfortunately their faces were turned away from Godfrey, so he had no idea as to their identity, but he caught the sense of her last low words:—"Success will come in the end, and our love is strong enough to stand the test."

As she finished speaking she, for the first time, became aware of the third presence, and a faint shriek escaped her lips. It struck Godfrey afterwards that seeing him suddenly in the dim light she believed him to be the ghostly apparition of the old squire.

In less time than it takes to tell it she and her companion had flown from the room, leaving him there alone.

He smiled a little grimly, picturing to himself their terror. At the same moment

the clock downstairs struck out twelve strokes, each beat pulsating on the still night air with a lingering vibration.

Godfrey looked round, asking himself whether he had indeed expected to see some visitant from the other world, and inclined to call himself a fool for his pains. It was a little lighter now than it had been when he entered. The stars seemed to burn with a clearer brilliance above the wide sweep of snow-clad park visible from the window, and a sort of reflection of the whiteness was projected into the room which seemed filled with an impalpable sort of mist, more dense at the other end where the fireplace was than here where the young man was standing.

Godfrey rubbed his eyes. That mist had certainly not been there a few minutes ago, and he wondered what had caused it. He made a step forward, but pulled himself up sharply as a deep, sorrowful sigh, exactly resembling the one he had heard down stairs in the afternoon, smote on his ear.

Were his senses playing him a trick, or could he trace in the mist at the other end of the apartment, the bent figure of an old man—an old man, whose shadowy eyes met his with a dumb appeal in them, while his thin fingers pointed in the direction of the mantelpiece, which was an antique one of carved oak.

For a moment Godfrey remained immovable—rooted to the spot by an undefinable terror. Then his courage returned to him, and he dashed forward.

"If this is an imposture, by Heaven, I will unmask it!" he cried, excitedly, and he reached out his hand, determining to grasp the figure by the arm.

But instead of meeting flesh and blood, his fingers only closed on the empty air. The vision, whatever might be its nature, had vanished. He was alone.

## CHAPTER VI. IN THE WOOD.

A WEEK passed away, and the new year came in fine and clear and frosty. Godfrey had been out shooting most days, and was doing his best to extract all the enjoyment he could from his surroundings; but he was obliged to confess that his efforts were not crowned with success. He was haunted, in spite of himself, by that vision of Christmas night, and though he tried to explain it away as a mere phantasm of his imagination he knew that in his heart of hearts he believed it to be something very different.

Still he would not give way to superstitious terrors, and in order to brace his nerves he had had his bed moved into the old squire's room, and slept there every night, determined that if there was a mystery he would fathom it.

He had deemed it wise so far to say nothing of his adventures to the other inmates of the house, for fear of alarming them. But he had already paid a visit to the county police station, and given all details of the attack made upon him the night of his arrival.

The Inspector, who saw him, promised his best attention to the case, which he acknowledged to be a very mysterious one, but he did not hold out much hope of discovering the miscreant who had fired the shot, owing to the total absence of any clue to his identity.

One evening Godfrey was returning from shooting rather later than usual. The keeper who had accompanied him during the day had already gone home with the game, but the young man still carried his gun, which lightly rested against his left shoulder. He was rather tired, and he walked slowly.

Turning to a sharp curve in the path, he

suddenly came face to face with a man dressed in corduroy trousers, and weather-beaten old coat of a labourer, with a basket of tools slung over his shoulders. He had evidently just lifted his hat from his brow, and the face disclosed, accorded so ill with the attire, that Godfrey could only gaze at him in astonishment. For the face was a dark, olive complexioned one, with fine eyes and clear cut features—that of a gentleman, in fact.

The moment he realized he was seen, he rammed his hat—which was a soft felt one—well down over his eyes, and passed on with a surly "good evening" in answer to Godfrey's salutation. The young squire turned to gaze after him, but he had already disappeared beyond the turn in the path.

Before he had recovered from his surprise, Godfrey saw, advancing towards him, the slim, well-proportioned little figure of Lena Selwin, and he hastened his footsteps as he advanced to meet her.

"I did not expect such a pleasant surprise," he said, gaily. "You are not often out so late."

"No," she returned, "I don't like the woods after dusk, and I should not have ventured now, but that I felt sure I should meet you."

Godfrey's heart gave a swift little throb of elation at this naive confession on her part. He was beginning to grow very fond of Mrs. Lennox's companion, but had lately found it difficult to see as much of her as he wished; and it also struck him that when they had met, she had interposed a slight barrier of reserve in their intercourse.

She turned back and walked by his side, at the same time taking off her veil, and looking sharply round on either hand, amongst the bushes. He fancied she was very nervous; the least sound made her start, and peer about in the direction from whence it came, and she continually glanced behind, as if she feared some one might overtake them.

Godfrey made several remarks, but she only gave him monosyllabic answers, and it was clear to him that she was playing small attentions to what he was saying. He was both piqued and surprised. It was not often young ladies whom he honoured with his attentions, received them in this pre-occupied fashion.

Once, when a bough crackled sharply at their left, she stood still with a quick little cry of terror, and then came round to his left side—she had hitherto been walking on the right—and clasped hold of his arm, while her face grew ghastly white.

"My dear little girl," he exclaimed. "What is the matter with you, what are you frightened of?"

"Of poachers," she answered, after a minute's pause, during which, she vainly tried to control her voice—and in her agitation she did not notice the caressive way in which he had addressed her. "This plantation is infested with them, so I have heard."

"But they would not be here at this time of the evening—the risk would be too great."

"They are daring enough for anything," she murmured, with white lips.

"Besides," he added, "even if they were about, they would do us no harm, indeed, they would naturally make every effort to keep out of our way. There is not the least reason why you should be so alarmed."

She made no reply, but her vigilance did not relax, she still kept a sharp look out all round.

The more Godfrey thought of her behaviour, the more puzzled he became. If she feared being in the woods so much, why had she come to meet him?

Not until they passed the little gates leading to the park, did she seem to breathe freely, then she disengaged her arm, which, up to now, had been drawn through his, and moved a little farther from his side.

"We are safe at last," she muttered, half inaudibly, while her eyes swept over the broad expanse of parkland, where the snow still lingered in patches—grown brown and smirched now, for it had been on the ground over a week.

"And if we are, that is no reason why we should walk half a mile apart!" he exclaimed, and he seized her arm, and restored it to its former position. For a moment she seemed inclined to resent this behaviour, but on second thoughts she allowed it to pass without demur, so arm in arm, they reached the Court, and for the time, Godfrey forgot the gloom of the house; and all the perplexities that beset him, and remembered only, that he was looking down into the sweetest eyes in the world.

What unwise things he might have said, cannot be known, had she not so promptly checked their utterance, and Godfrey had to admit, with some mortification, that she evidently refused to have any sort of flirtation with him.

Directly they entered the house, she ran upstairs, and he, delivering his gun into the charge of Rowley, proceeded to the morning room, where he found Mrs. Lennox standing at the window, which commanded a view of the avenue, up which he and Miss Selwin had just walked. She greeted him with a smile of her full red lips.

"Well, have you had a good day's sport?"

"Pretty fair."

"You are rather late."

"Yes, we have walked slowly."

"Was!" repeated Mrs. Lennox, raising her brows. "To whom does that refer?"

"I met Miss Selwin in the plantation, so we returned together."

"Oh!" observed Mrs. Lennox, and her tone was so peculiar that he looked at her inquiringly. However, she made no further remark, but took a seat opposite to him, and put out one elegantly-shod foot on the fender.

"Miss Selwin is a strange girl," she said, musingly, after a pause, "I confess I cannot quite understand her. My own impression is there is a mystery about her somewhere."

"This house teems with mysteries, I think," he observed, drily; and then, acting under a sudden impulse, he gave an account of the interview he had interrupted in the old squire's room on Christmas night.

Mrs. Lennox was both astonished and disturbed.

"Who could the couple possibly have been?" she murmured, looking at him with mystified eyes. "Do you think they were either of them servants?"

"No, I do not," very decidedly.

"Then," added the handsome widow, lowering her voice, and leaning a little towards him, "the woman was Miss Selwin, and the man was her lover. You may well look surprised, but that is surely the solution of the problem. I knew already that the girl had a lover, but for some reason—the opposition of his family, I believe—they were unable to marry. He has been down here to see her more than once, but I objected to his visits, and lately they have ceased. I suppose that, finding they could not meet openly, she has given him a secret assignation. It was most imprudent—most foolish of her."

Godfrey leaned back in his chair, and shaded his face with his hand, in order that his companion might not see the pallor that had overspread it. Lena Selwin engaged



to another man! The idea was more than distasteful to him—it was absolutely repulsive. All in a minute the truth flashed upon him—he loved the girl himself!

He could have groaned aloud in his bitterness of spirit, but with a great effort he controlled himself. After a short silence, he said,—

"Do you really think this idea of yours is a correct one?"

"I am sure of it," she returned, with energy; and, more than that, I believe the man frequently comes down here in disguise. This afternoon, when I saw her leave the house, I felt convinced she had gone to meet him."

Godfrey started. A sudden thought suggested itself to him.

"Have you ever seen this man—her lover?" he asked, and on her nodding an affirmative, he added, "to be slight and dark, with an olive complexion, and rather a foreign look about him?"

"You have seen him, then, yourself!" exclaimed Mrs. Lennox, with some excitement. "You must have done so, for you have described him exactly."

"Yes; I saw him this afternoon," answered Godfrey, and now he thought he understood Lena's strange agitation. She had been afraid of her lover, turning back and overtaking her, and that was why she had kept such a keen look out. And yet, as they walked back up the park, and her hand rested on his arm, her eyes had been raised so innocently to his, and he would have been willing to stake his life on her purity and truth!

"She must leave," continued Mrs. Lennox, firmly. "I gave her notice nearly a month ago, for I told her, after my husband's death, that I could not afford to keep her on as a companion. Only she begged to be allowed to stay—she even offered to forego her salary, and I, in a moment of weakness, allowed myself to be over-persuaded. In the morning, I must ask her to fix a date for her departure. She will not get over me a second time by her entreaties. Besides, there is no reason why I should keep a companion now. My hand is much better, and I can even manage to write letters with a pencil, though pen and ink are as yet beyond me."

She stretched out her hand and looked at it contemplatively. The fingers were stiff and bent, and had lost all their graceful symmetry; from the wrist, downwards, the hand was disfigured. After a minute she looked across at Godfrey.

"This was the work of my husband—a loving memento to leave to his widow, was it not? Altogether, I think I have fairly good cause to hate the name of Lennox."

## CHAPTER VII.

### A DARK NIGHT'S WORK.

LENA SELWIN took rather more pains than usual with her toilet that evening; instead of her usual black dress she put on a red silk blouse, trimmed with lace, and she coiled the glossy masses of hair round and round her well-shaped head, and stuck a bit of vivid scarlet geranium in one side. The image given back to her by the glass was a very pretty one, and as she glanced at it her lips trembled into a smile that lent a charming expression of girlish gaiety to her mobile face.

There were many troubles looming before her, but she was young, and for the moment lost remembrance of them in recalling the glances of a certain pair of eyes that had looked into her's only that afternoon. Her heart beat rather faster than usual as she tripped down the polished oak stairs and hesitated for a moment in front of the drawing room door, through whose chink

she saw Godfrey standing alone on the hearthrug, with his eyes downcast.

He raised them as she entered, and made some perfunctory remark concerning the coldness of the evening, but his voice was frigidity itself, and he carefully refrained from looking at her as he spoke.

Poor Lena's heart sank, and a deep flush of mortification rose to her cheeks. She took up a book and occupied herself with it until Mrs. Lennox came in. Godfrey's behaviour to her the rest of the evening was marked by unmistakable constraint, indeed he hardly once addressed her, although he and his uncle's widow kept up a much more animated conversation than usual. Lena felt completely out in the cold. She might as well have been a hundred miles away for all the notice either of her companions took of her.

Late in the evening Mrs. Lennox challenged Godfrey to a game of chess, which was not finished until after eleven o'clock. The night had become wild and tempestuous, the wind howled and the branches creaked beneath its fury; the ivy tapped against the window panes like ghostly fingers importuning an entrance, and in the distance was heard the low rumbling of thunder.

"What a night!" exclaimed Mrs. Lennox, rising from the game, in which she had been victorious, "and we have almost sat the fire out, too! It will never do to go to bed chilly, especially as you have been coughing, and seem to have caught cold. Shall I brew you some punch? I especially pride myself on that accomplishment, and Rowley has brought us some hot water in the copper kettle, which the spirit lamp is keeping warm."

To such an offer it would have been ungallant of Godfrey to give a refusal, so Mrs. Lennox began her preparations at the little side table where the spirit stand was placed, and presently left the room to get a lemon, which Rowley had neglected to bring in. At the same time Miss Selwin, who had been pretending to read, rose and said good night.

Godfrey watched her go out, then turned round and putting his elbows on the mantelpiece leaned his head on his hands and tried to persuade himself that his heart was not aching very bitterly at the thought that he had lost her. How he hated that foreign looking fellow, with his handsome eyes and clear skin, whom he now knew to be his rival! It would go hard with one of them if ever they met.

Something flicked him lightly on the cheek, and dropped on the rug at his feet. Picking it up he discovered it to be a folded scrap of paper with a few words scrawled on the inner side—"You are in peril. Be careful. Do not drink anything that may be offered you to-night in Lennox Court, but guard yourself from appearing suspicious. Forewarned is forearmed. This is the third time the gipsy has come to your aid."

There was no signature, and the note was evidently very hurriedly written. The paper was dirty, and the pencil marks were faint. But how it came there, at that moment, was more than Godfrey could understand. Nevertheless, its appearance seemed on a par with the other strange things that had happened to him since his arrival at Lennox Court.

He thrust the paper in his pocket as Mrs. Lennox returned, holding the lemon in her hand, and he noticed that in making the punch she stood all the time with her back towards him. But for those warning words so mysteriously sent him he might not have noticed this circumstance, now he wondered whether it was not significant.

"There!" she exclaimed, coming towards

him, and holding out the steaming beverage, which gave out a most inviting fragrance. "Taste that, and tell me if I have not concocted it very cleverly."

He put his lips to the sides of the glass. "It is delicious, but isn't it rather strong? I think, if you'll let me, I'll fetch a biscuit out of the dining-room to eat with it. I always like to eat something when I drink spirits."

His intention was to take the punch with him and contrive to empty it somewhere in the dining-room, but Mrs. Lennox declared she would fetch the biscuit herself, and left him for the purpose of doing so.

Godfrey glanced round hastily in search of something that would hold the punch. A big Chinese vase stood near one of the windows, and this answered the purpose admirably.

"What, have you finished it?" exclaimed Mrs. Lennox, returning, and glancing quickly at the empty glass, which he still held in his hand.

"I'm afraid I have. It was too seductive to be resisted. I never tasted such punch before." His voice had a strained sound that made her look at him sharply.

"Has it made you feel sleepy?" she asked.

"It has, indeed. I'm half asleep already, I think." He yawned, but his eyes did not leave her face, over which a swift look of triumph passed.

"Then I think you will be wise if you lose no time in getting to bed," she observed, leading the way from the room, outside which the butler was standing, waiting to put out the lights. "Good night," she added, shaking hands with the young man. "You had better lock your bedroom door, for the wind whistles down that corridor quite furiously, and might force it open if you depended wholly on the handle. For my part I shall get Miss Selwin to come and sleep with me—I am always nervous if I am alone in such a hurricane as this."

She proceeded up the staircase, he following, but while she went to the left he took the right-hand turning on the landing, and walked down the long passage that led to his chamber, the flame of the candle he held in his hand flickering unsteadily in the draught.

He so far followed her advice as to lock his door, after which he made a thorough examination of the room, which appeared to be exactly as usual, except that the wind seemed to be holding a high and riotous festival in the chimney, down which a quantity of mortar had already fallen. Then Godfrey set himself to seriously consider the situation. He more than suspected that the punch Mrs. Lennox offered him had been drugged—once he even thought it might be poisoned, but he dismissed the idea immediately. His uncle's widow was much too clever a woman to make such a mistake as that, seeing that both Lena Selwin and Rowley, the butler, knew she brewed the punch, and suspicion would inevitably have fallen on her in consequence of anything happening to him. Still, he remembered that she was the person most interested in his death, for according to her husband's will she would benefit by it to the extent of becoming absolute mistress of the Lennox estates.

Godfrey shuddered at the direction his thoughts were taking. Up to half-an-hour ago he had not only been absolutely suspicious of the woman, but even inclined to like and admire her. The change in his feelings had been wrought by that slip of paper so mysteriously conveyed to him in the drawing room during her temporary absence. Who, and what was the gipsy who so carefully watched over his welfare? The young man's head absolutely whirled

as he tried to give an answer to this question, but without success.

"Perhaps, after all, it is someone who is playing a trick on me—some inmate of the Court who is having a stupendous joke at my expense," he said to himself at last, but the thought was too humiliating to be entertained. Nevertheless it haunted him with the pertinacity of a nightmare, and he decided the only way to get rid of it was to jump into bed, and try to find forgetfulness in sleep.

He had, however, small hope of that sleep gentle poppies would visit his eyelids that night; thought and wonder were much too tumultuous within him, beside which the storm raging outside was in itself enough to keep him awake. Now the wind howled and tore round the chimneys, and what havoc it must be making amongst the tossing boughs in the park. Godfrey shuddered as he thought of the poor wretches who might be outside, and exposed to its pitiless fury. But after all, the point to which his mind came back, was, that Lena Selwin could never be anything to him, and that those vague dreams which had lately been floating in his mind, had melted away into the thinnest of thin airs.

He sighed as he turned on his pillow, and closed his eyes, in a vain effort to find oblivion. Already he had heard the time-piece downstairs strike the hours once or twice, and now it was between one and two o'clock. Ever and again a lull would come the tempest, and then the profound stillness that reigned was almost startling in its intensity.

Suddenly, Godfrey became aware of a faint sound that had nothing to do with the storm, and which seemed to come from the window, which, according to his invariable custom, he had left open an inch or two at the top. His first impulse was to spring up, and ascertain what it was, but on second thoughts he lay still, determining to let events unfold themselves before he moved.

Evidently, the lower sash of the window was, very gently, being forced upwards. Someone was trying to effect an entrance into the room. Godfrey thought of his revolver, and wished he had not been so ready to present it to Mr. Bennett, it would have been useful to this emergency, perhaps. However, he was strong and agile, and would probably prove a match for the intruder, whoever he might be. That he was a burglar, Godfrey did not for a moment suspect. He felt pretty sure this untoward visit must have some connection with the warning given him by the fortune teller.

Just now, a pause had come in the war of the elements, and the sounds at the window ceased, but from the rush of air, Godfrey knew that the sash must be at least half raised, and though he lay very still, with his eyes partly closed, he was watching with the utmost alertness, ready to spring up and defend himself the moment the occasion warranted it.

His eyes, grown accustomed to the darkness, were able to distinguish pretty fairly, the outline of all objects in the room, and he could see the linen blind, which covered the window, gently pushed on one side, to make room for the entrance of a man, who, after he stood inside, waited for a few minutes, and seemed to be listening intently, while his gaze was fixed on the recumbent figure in the bed. Godfrey breathed rather loudly, and like a person under the influence of a narcotic, thus hoping to put the intruder off his guard, for he argued that the latter was probably aware of the attempt made to drug him, and imagined it to have been successful.

This was, indeed, the case, as after events proved. The man advanced to the door, which was fastened on the inner side,

and then crept slowly towards the bed, with a gliding, snake-like movement that involuntarily made the watcher shudder. As he came nearer, a gleam of starshine that made its way through a sudden rift in the clouds outside, fell on a tiny glittering blade he carried in his right hand—a blade almost as small as a lancet, and of the same shape.

Curiously enough, Godfrey, who, up to this moment, had been absolutely free from fear, felt a sudden shock of terror, which had almost a paralyzing effect on him. He was quite prepared to see a revolver, or even a knife in the hand of his nocturnal visitor, but that tiny glittering point threatened him with a new danger, against which he hardly knew how to defend himself. Moreover, there was a species of deadly menace in the quietly assured movements of his foe, and the mesmeric influence of his intent gaze, that seemed to hold the young man under a sort of coil spell.

He felt a numbness in his limbs, a powerlessness against which he was unable to struggle. For the first time he understood the fascination by which a serpent holds the miserable bird he has selected for his victim.

Nearer and nearer came the stealthily gliding figure, each advance marked by the glittering steel blade, which Godfrey instinctively knew, threatened him with death. And all the while the lull in the storm continued, and an almost unearthly stillness reigned.

At last the man reached the bedside, and listened again to the breathing of the supposed sleeper. He was in no hurry, on the contrary, all his movements were marked by extreme deliberation. He seemed to be following out some preconcerted plan, of whose ultimate success he had no sort of doubt.

Godfrey made a supreme effort to throw off the catalepsy that seemed to have seized him. It was unavailing. He could neither move hand nor foot—all he could do was to passively await his doom.

Quite suddenly a blinding sheet of flame quivered across the air, lighting up everything in the room with lurid distinctness. Then, for the first time, Godfrey saw his companion's face—it was that of the man he had met in the plantation yesterday afternoon—the man who was Lena Selwin's lover.

The latter, on his part, was taken at a momentary disadvantage, for he found himself looking straight into the eyes that he fancied were held fast in a drugged sleep. In his astonishment he fell back a few paces, while a tremendous peal of thunder seemed to shake the house to its very foundations, and a mass of bricks and mortar fell down the chimney, bringing part of the mantelpiece with it.

That moment's respite was Godfrey's salvation. No longer held by the magnetic power of those evil brown eyes his strength came back to him, and in a second he had sprang out of bed, and hurled himself on the other, who was much more slightly built than himself. But in spite of this, he was active and wiry, and proved that he was not an antagonist to be despised. For the space of ten minutes—it seemed to Godfrey like hours!—the two writhed in a desperate embrace, each trying his best to throw the other, Godfrey's strength being well met by his antagonist's superior agility. How the struggle would have ended it is impossible to say, had not an accident put an end to it. In the darkness the intruder stumbled against one of the fallen pieces of masonry, and of this Godfrey took instant advantage. They both fell to the floor, but Godfrey was uppermost, and now his enemy was at his mercy—he could do with him what he would.

Moreover, assistance was close at hand. There came a violent knocking at the door, and the voice of Rowley, who had heard the collapse of the chimney, and hurried to see the extent of the damage done—demanded admittance.

"Come in—burst upon the door!" shouted Godfrey, who was growing exhausted under the severe strain that had been put upon him, and a little later the butler had obeyed him, and forced an entrance into the room.

He carried a candle in his hand, and the scene upon which it fell must have astonished him not a little. The room was literally strewn with rubbish, the upper part of the oak mantelpiece had fallen, and on the floor was his master, straining every muscle to hold down another man, upon seeing whose face Rowley gave a little exclamation of recognition.

"Why, I'm blessed if it isn't Doctor Carew? What on earth is he doing here at this time of night?"

"Never mind that. Just bring me some good stout cords, and help me to bind him, and then we can get an explanation." Godfrey returned briefly, and it must be confessed that the butler displayed considerable alacrity in obeying him.

"Now," said the young squire, when they had completed their task to their satisfaction, and the vanquished man lay on the floor, so secured that he was unable to move hand or foot, "I should like to know all you can tell me concerning this gentleman, whose name, you say, is Doctor Carew."

"Well, sir, he's a sort of cousin of Mrs. Lennox, and used to be here pretty often when she was first married, until the last squire—your uncle—found out that he was getting too friendly with her, and forbade him the house. Then he didn't come again, and the squire once hinted to me that he had a hold on him in the shape of a forged cheque, which he held over his head to prevent him from coming back."

"Oh!" commented Godfrey, a sudden light breaking in upon him, "Then he is Mrs. Lennox's friend, not Miss Selwin's?"

"Miss Selwin has never set eyes on him, to the best of my belief, and it was partly on his account that the squire engaged her to act as companion to his wife. He was determined there should be no secret meetings or things of that sort goin' on, if he could help it."

Godfrey breathed a deep sigh of relief. After all Lena was free to be wooed and won! "And Doctor Carew didn't bear the best of reputations either," went on Rowley, who owed the man a grudge, and had no objection to paying it now that an opportunity offered. "His name was brought into a poisoning case, and it was said he knew a deal more about poisons than he ought. That's the reason he left off practising as a doctor, so I'm told."

Godfrey had not removed his eyes from his prisoner, and as the butler made his statement he observed Carew glance with a quick anxiety to a spot just out of his reach, where lay the little lancet. Instantly he understood its mission. It was poisoned, and would have required only one prick of it to introduce the deadly venom it which it had been dipped into his veins. The wound would have been so minute that even a post-mortem examination might in all probability have failed to reveal it, and it would be presumed he had died a natural death.

Godfrey shivered as the thought of the diabolical cunning that had planned his destruction. He picked up the lancet and locked it carefully away in an oaken bureau, and as he came back, picking his way gingerly amongst the bricks and mortar littering the floor, his eye was caught by a



recess in the mantelpiece, which the fall of its upper portion revealed. In this cavity was stuffed a paper, yellow with age, and with the superscription written on the back in ink, that time had turned to a faint brown. It ran as follows:—

"This is the last will and testament of me, Philip Lennox, made this tenth day of August, 18—."

#### CHAPTER VIII.

##### THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

THE morning broke calm and fair. The clouds had cleared away, the wind had fallen, the sun shone, and only the great branches snapped off the trees, the shrubs torn up by the roots, the broken slates and fallen masonry remained to tell of the storm of the night before.

Upstairs, guarded by two menservants, lay Carew, and Godfrey, as he entered the dining-room, where the table was laid ready for breakfast, smiled with grim satisfaction as he thought of him. For the rest, the young man's expression was worn and harassed, telling plainly of a sleepless night.

He had hardly crossed the threshold before he was joined by Mrs. Lennox. Mrs. Lennox, very pale, but with eyes that were more than defiant. She was playing a bold game, and even yet would not confess herself defeated.

She closed the door and advanced to the fireplace, near which the young man was standing.

"Tell me the meaning of the strange events that have happened in the night," she said, boldly. "The servants inform me you have a prisoner upstairs. What are you going to do with him?"

"Have him taken to the County Police Station, and charged with attempted murder."

She was hardly prepared for the reply. She staggered back a step and put her hand against her heart.

"You will not dare!" she muttered from between her clenched teeth.

"Why not? I know nothing that should make me show mercy to the miscreant, and he would certainly have killed me if he could. There is only one thing that would induce me to give him his freedom," he added, slowly, and watching her as he spoke.

She looked up eagerly.

"And what is that?"

"A full confession on your part—or on his, it does not matter much which. I want to know the truth, although I think, with my present knowledge, I can make a fairly good guess at it." He came a step nearer, and looked down into her eyes. "Shall I give you my version of it, Mrs. Lennox? Very well, then listen. This man Carew is your lover, you intend marrying him;—perhaps, indeed, you are married to him already, but both you and him coveted the money your first husband had left behind him, and you conspired together to get it. If I died, then the estate was yours. It was Carew who fired at me on the evening of my arrival, and ever since then you and he have been on the look out for an opportunity of achieving your wicked purpose. You did not hesitate to tell me a lie yesterday, when I informed you I had seen this man—you said he was Lena Selwin's lover, and you tried to make me believe it was she who met him in the old Squire Phillips room on Christmas night, instead of which I am now convinced it was you yourself. If matters regarding the estate were to-day as they were this time yesterday, no earthly consideration would induce me to spare Carew, but that is not so. In a secret recess in the mantelpiece of the old squire's room was hidden away the old squire's

will, which last night's tempest brought to light. In it he leaves all his estates to his daughter Lucy and her heirs, so that you see your husband never had the shadow of a right to Lennox Court, any more than I myself have. I have sent that will over to the bank at W— by a trusty messenger, and I have already posted a letter to my lawyer acquainting him with its contents, and instructing him to try and trace the heirs of Lucy Cleveland. You will, therefore, observe that my death would not benefit you the least bit in the world, and, therefore, I imagine that I run no future risk. Have I made the situation plain to you?"

She had dropped the mask of self-control by whose aid she had hitherto contrived so successfully to conceal her real character, and her evil passions now showed plainly enough in her face. Anger, disappointment, surprise, and despair succeeded each other, and as Godfrey ceased speaking a groan escaped her lips. So all her plotting had been in vain—Lennox Court and its broad acres had gone from her for ever!

"Well," she said, at last, with a certain dull despair, "I suppose I may as well throw down the cards, and do what you suggest. Yes, all you have said is quite true, I did intend to become sole mistress of this place, and I will tell you something else, too—my husband, when he made his will, knew that I should not let obstacles stand in my way, and that is why he made you his heir—he anticipated what I should do to get rid of them; and he foresaw a noble revenge on both of us. For he hated you to the fall as much as he hated me, and that is saying a good deal."

In spite of himself Godfrey shuddered.

"I thank Heaven the truth is revealed; yes, though it makes a beggar of me. I have not a penny to call my own, and yet I should be sorry to still find myself master of this accursed place."

But Mrs. Lennox was not listening to him—her thoughts had flown to the man who was lying bound upstairs.

"You will keep your word—you will let Carew go free?" she exclaimed; and when Godfrey reiterated his promise, she left the room to see that it was immediately fulfilled.

As she departed Lena Selwin came in, looking pale and worn, as if she, too, had not slept. Godfrey came forward and took her hands, and there was a subtle difference in his manner that she was swift to note.

"What has happened during the night?" she asked, rather breathlessly, and almost in Mrs. Lennox's words. "Are you unhurt?"

He assured her that he was, and in few sentences gave her a brief outline of the events that had culminated in the finding of the will. Although she listened with downcast eyes, he had no reason to complain of inattention on her part, for she followed every syllable with the most absorbed interest.

"And now," he said in conclusion, "it only remains for me to leave the Court and to find the real heir, or heiress, whichever it may be. I did not know until Rowley told me this morning that when Lucy Cleveland and her child were dragged out of the pond it was found that the baby still lived, and that she was afterwards adopted by the landlady of the house in which her mother formerly lived. She must be a middle-aged woman now—married most likely, and with children of her own."

"And she will take from you your heritage," Lena Selwin said, in a curious tone, as she looked up into his eyes.

"I do not begrudge it her. Perhaps when the wrong is righted the shadow will be

lifted from this place. Moreover," his voice became more earnest, "My short hours of wealth has taught me a lesson which will last me all my life. It has shown me that happiness does not at all depend on riches, and that there is a dignity in labour beyond anything that wealth can bestow. I have made up my mind to go to the Colonies, and begin life over again there. I have only one regret in leaving England."

"And that?"

He came nearer, and put his hands on her shoulders.

"And that is that I must leave you! For Lena, I have learned to love you very dearly, and my one hope is that I may sometime call you 'wife.' Will you wait for me, dearest? I am a poor man, and I cannot offer you much beyond the whole devotion of my heart—"

Apparently it was enough, for in another minute she was sobbing on his breast, while Godfrey showered kisses on her pretty dark head as it rested against his shoulder. Presently she raised it.

"I too have a confession to make, and I don't know what you will think of me when you have heard it. Have you never wondered who was the fortune teller who so astounded you on the night of Lady Newton's party?"

"Indeed I have—many and many times."

"I am the culprit."

"You! Then it was you who saved my life on the night of my arrival, and again last night—?"

"Yes. I will explain to you how it was. I have one sister, who in order to earn her living became a professional clairvoyante, and palmist, and she was engaged by Lady Newton on the night of the dance to amuse her guests. As it happened she was ill, and could not go, so she wired to me to come up to town, and in the end, acting under her instructions, I took her place. Of course, when you came in the tavern I recognized you directly, for I had seen your photograph at Lennox Court, where the old squire had just died, and I knew you were the heir. Hence it was not difficult for me to tell you things that sounded very wonderful to you. I knew too that Mrs. Lennox was bitterly disappointed in her husband's will, and hated you because you had taken the place she wished to occupy herself, and from the words she let drop, and the fact that Dr. Carew was haunting the place, I fancied some plot was on hand against your life. Later on I found my idea confirmed, and you know the steps I took to thwart it. Yesterday afternoon I caught sight of Carew in the shrubbery, and hastened to meet you in the woods, lest he should again make an attack on you. Then, when I saw Mrs. Lennox brewing your punch last night, I felt convinced mischief was afoot, and after I had left the drawing-room I contrived to scribble my warning, and throw it inside before she returned. I intended trying to speak to you, and tell you my suspicions, but Mrs. Lennox must have suspected me, for she insisted on my sleeping in her room, and I could not escape. You may imagine what a terrible night I have had."

Once more Godfrey took her in his arms and kissed her.

"What a brave little darling you are, Lena. But what made you take such an interest in me at first?"

She blushed rosily.

"Ah, that involves another confession. I took an interest in you before I ever knew you, just as I did in Lennox Court. Indeed, it was for the same reason that I obtained the situation as companion here. Godfrey, prepare yourself for a surprise. The little baby who was rescued from the pond was my mother."

For a minute Godfrey could hardly believe he heard aright, but Lena spoke quite seriously, and there was a look in her face which somehow convinced him.

"Yes," she added, "my mother was the daughter of poor unfortunate Lucy Cleveland, and she married the nephew of the people who adopted her. My sister Clarice and myself were her only children, and when she and my father died we had to go into the world and earn our own living. I had always taken the greatest interest in my grandmother's story, and was very anxious to see the place that had formerly been her home, and so, when there was a chance of obtaining a situation here, I eagerly availed myself of it."

"Then," said Godfrey, still half bewildered, "there is no necessity to search for Lucy Cleveland's heirs; they are found already!"

These events happened three or four years ago, and now Lennox Court is no longer the shunned and gloomy place to which we first introduced the readers. Indeed, by popular acclaim, it is voted one of the most charming and hospitable houses in the neighbourhood.

The cedar and ivy have been cut down; paint and whitewash have done a good deal, but the presence of handsome Godfrey Lennox and his pretty wife and children have done most in effecting the metamorphosis.

The wrong has been righted, and the curse lifted.

Lena's sister lives with the young couple, who are ideally happy.

There is only one secret between them; Godfrey has never told his wife of the shadowy form he saw on the hearth of the old squire's room on Christmas night. Perhaps he is afraid she might laugh at him for his faith in it; but he holds his own belief on the subject, and agrees with Shakespeare that—

"There are more things in Heaven and earth  
Than are dreamt of in our philosophy!"

[THE END.]

## MOTHERS AND BABIES.

In Spain the infant's face is swept with a pine tree bough to bring it good luck.

Esthonian mothers attach bits of the evil-smelling asafoetida to the necks of their offspring.

Roumanian mothers tie red ribbons around the ankles of their children to keep them from harm.

Among Vosges peasants children born at new moon are supposed to have a sharper tongue than those born under the last quarter.

Welsh mothers, to ensure the safety of their babes, put a pair of tongs or a knife in the cradle. In some parts of England the same practice prevails.

In Ireland a belt of woman's hair is placed about a child to keep harm away, and garlic, salt, bread, and steak are put into the cradle of a new-born baby in Holland.

As soon as her child is born the Turkish mother loads it with amulets, and a small bit of mud, steeped in hot water, prepared by previous charms, is stuck on its forehead.

At a birth of a child in lower Brittany the neighbouring women take it in charge, wash it, crack its joints, and rub its head in oil to solder the cranium. It is then wrapped in a tight bundle and its lips touched with brandy to make it a full Breton.

## Society

THE days when kings died in semi-publicly, after the manner of Charles II., are done, and Royal families are now allowed to be as sensitive as their subjects about the privacy of a death-bed. The Empress Frederick had her particular reserves in such matters, and it was by her own wish that she was attended in her last moments only by her own children. It may be added that Queen Victoria shared this feeling of her eldest daughter's, and she was not a party to the summoning of even the Kaiser to her side. His Majesty, well aware of the reluctance that would be felt to make this tax on his time and emotion, took the matter into his own hands, and, having an arrangement with a Court official to be informed in cipher when his grandmother should be dangerously ill, came over of his own accord, not waiting for the invitation which all sorts of considerations naturally delay.

AMONG the most sincere mourners for the Empress Frederick must be numbered the Empress Eugenie. As a girl, the Princess Royal attracted the notice of the Emperor and the Empress of the French on the occasion of their famous State visit to her parents. Her cleverness at once caught the notice of the Empress Eugenie, as it afterwards turned many thoughts towards her during the Franco-German war. After those days of strain Queen Victoria's welcome to the fugitive Empress had no heartier approver than the Crown Princess of Germany. During one of her last visits to England the Empress Frederick visited Aldershot while her brother, the Duke of Connaught, commanded there; and on that occasion the neighbourhood of Farnborough made easy, in one sense, a meeting between the two ladies, both widows. The Empress Frederick, during that visit to Aldershot, still gave that special English accent which so much angered Bismarck to all she did and said. Her very pronunciation of English was pronounced. "Tea or coffee, ma'am?" asked a hostess at afternoon tea. "A cup o' tea," replied the Empress, with all the fulness of homeliness she kept at command.

THE Australian press is unanimous as to the good effect of the Royal visit. Australian loyalty, it is affirmed, required no strengthening, but the personal element which has been imported into her relations with the Mother Country, can only be beneficial. The visit, it is added, has been an unqualified success, and all its hopes have been fulfilled, while it has emphasized the kindly graciousness of the Duke and Duchess. It is also generally considered that Australia worthily rose to the great occasion.

IT is rather doubtful if Lord Kitchener will go south to meet the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York on their coming visit to South Africa. Reliable advices state, however, that he hopes to be able to do so, more especially as he is badly in need of a little rest and change.

QUEEN CAROLA of Saxony, who has just attained the age of sixty-eight, is the last survivor of the House of Vasa, being the only child of the late Prince Gustavus Vasa, son of the deposed King Gustavus IV. of Sweden. Her mother was a daughter of the Grand Duke of Baden, and the Grand Duchess Stephanie, adopted daughter of Napoleon I. On the revival of the French Empire in 1852, Napoleon III. was desirous of marrying this princess. His proposal being declined, he, somewhat hurriedly, married the Empress Eugenie in January, 1853, the Vasa Princess becoming Crown Princess of Saxony six months later. The Queen is childless, and the King's brother is his heir-presumptive.

## Statistics

THE longest railroad tunnel in the world is that of the Mount Saint Gothard, in the Alps of Switzerland. It is 16,285 yards in length, or nearly 9½ miles.

THE most expensive English scientific work is the story of the Challenger voyage, told in fifty volumes, costing over £100,000. The most voluminous living novelist is Miss Braddon, whose pen is said to have been worth to her more than £100,000.

THE elaborate statistics relating to the crime and criminal proceedings in England and Wales during the year 1899, which have just been issued in the form of a Blue-book, show a smaller amount of crime "known to the police" than in any year of which there is a complete record, i.e., since 1857. In curious contrast with this, it is pointed out parenthetically that the criminal statistics of Scotland record an increase of criminal work "so great as to make 1899 a record year, the number of persons apprehended or cited being the largest ever before recorded." The crimes committed or known to the police in England and Wales during 1899 were 76,025. The decrease in crimes extended to all but fourteen out of fifty-three counties. As showing, however, that a year of great prosperity was also a year of great drunkenness, the prosecutions for that offence, 214,293, were the highest figure since 1857, the convictions numbering 189,633, against 178,142 in 1898. In 1899 the consumption of spirits per head (1·054 gallons) was the largest since 1891. The fact that this was not accompanied by an increase of crime is accounted for by pointing out that nine-tenths of the crimes were against property, which would not be affected by drunkenness, and the notable fact that there was a decrease in crimes of violence and other offences which might be supposed to be intimately connected with drunkenness. A great increase in gaming offences is noted.

## Gems

IT is the greatest possible praise to be praised by a man who is himself deserving of praise.

IT is worth a thousand pounds a year to have the habit of looking on the bright side of things.

THERE is no greater fool than he who thinks himself wise; no one wiser than he who suspects he is a fool.

WE are born at home, we live at home, and we must die at home; so that the comforts and economies of home are of more deep, heartfelt, and personal interest to us than the public affairs of all the nations in the world.

A BLESSING beyond wealth, beyond beauty, or even beyond talent, is that cheerful temperament which can rejoice in the sunshine, yet be merry in the shade—which can delight in the singing of the birds in spring, yet solace itself with the heart's own music when winter is at hand.

## What Love Needs.

Love, that foundation stone of married happiness, without which no place can be called a home, must school itself to common sense and unselfishness before a girl can grow into a good and helpful wife. Without an enlightened principle of action, and some real knowledge of how to rule over and administer her affairs as the steward of her husband, the most devoted affection will fail to produce a happy home. Mere readiness to yield everything and give all does not make either a good or a useful helpmeet.



# THE DIRECT Photo-Engraving Co.

(F. E. S. PERRY).

**38, Farringdon Street,  
LUDGATE CIRCUS, E.C.**

Photo Engravers and Etchers in Line and Half-Tone.  
Photo-Process Blocks of every description on Zinc or Copper  
for Newspaper, Magazine, Book and General Illustration.  
Catalogues for every Business Illustrated and Printed.  
Photographers Sent to all Parts.

## Collotype Printing

For Fine Art and Commercial Purposes.

Prices and Specimens on Application.

The Illustrations in "THE LONDON READER" are reproduced by  
the Company.

## Marriage, Weddings, and the Home.

This new book, with preface by Dean Farrar, contains information on the following points:—Fixing the date—Banns or Licence—Notices to be given—Residential Qualifications—Special Licence—Nonconformist and Roman Catholic Marriages—Registry Office—Marriage with Foreigners—Barriers to Matrimony—Settlements—Legal Hours of Weddings—Invitations—Presents—Wedding Dress—Bridegroom's Attire—Bridemaids—Their Dress—Bridemaids' Presents—Bouquets—Floral Decorations—Clergy—Organist and Choir—Guards of Honour—The Ring—Invitations to the Press—Duties of the Best Man—Groomsmen—Arrival of the Guests—Duties of the Chief Bridegroom—Carriages to Church—Forming the Procession—Positions for the Ceremony—Giving away the Bride—Exhortation or Address—Signing the Register—Favours—Leaving the Church—After the Ceremony: Reception of Guests—Congratulating the Bride and Bridegroom—Breakfast or Luncheon—The Wedding Cake—Tea—Etiquette of Guests leaving—The Honeymoon: Where to go—Hotels and their Cost in Great Britain—Tours on the Continent: Cost—Tickets—Hints on Dress and Luggage—The Loan of a Country House—The Homecoming—Cards—The First "At Home"—About Calls—The First Dinner Party.

### THE FIRST HOME, BY MRS. TALBOT COKE,

Explains everything in regard to the Choice of a House—Builder of the House—Sanitary Precautions—Gradual Purchase v. Rent—Income—Cost of Furnishing—Gradual Payment System—The Hall—Stair Carpet—Hall Furniture—Lighting of the Hall—Wall Decorations—Curtain Rods—Choice of Wall Paper—Best kind of Carpets—Carpets v. Curtains—Furniture—Bedrooms—The Guest Chamber—Servants' Room—Bath Room—Kitchen and Offices—Cooking Utensils—Table and House Linen.

ABSOLUTELY INVALUABLE TO ALL ENGAGED COUPLES.

Post free, 1/6 from

F. W. SEARS, 7, Osborne Chambers, Ludgate Hill,  
LONDON, E.C.

Send To-day.

## Facetiæ.

"SIR, I would like to have your daughter for a wife." "Have you any recommendations from your former father-in-law?"

A PROUD YOUTH.—Elderly Lady: "Was that your sister I saw you with yesterday, Johnny?" Johnny (aged 6): "Do I look like a fellow who'd waste time on sisters?"

NO INCREASE.—Winks: "The Daily Boomer claims to have doubled its circulation this year." Jinks: "Don't believe it. The Boomer hasn't been a bit wickeder this year than it was last."

A SILVER LINING.—Mrs. Kindie: "I presume you have rather a hard time of it?" Tramp: "Yes mum; but every cloud has a silver lining, mum. I'm not worried to death by autograph hunters, mum."

"YOUNG MAN," he said, solemnly, "what would you think if I should put an enemy into my mouth to steal away my brains?" "I would—hic—think, sir," hiccupped the young man, "that you were going to an unnecessary expense."

SOME SATISFACTION.—Stranger: "Suppose a policeman exceeds his authority, and assaults reputable citizens, what redress have you?" Mr. Gotham: "Well, those of us who get killed have the privilege of swearing at him through a spiritual medium."

UNDERSTOOD HIS BUSINESS.—Fruit Vendor: "Why you notta tella me move on?" Policeman: "Your cart is not in the way there." Fruit Vendor: "Den I put ita in da way, and I wanta you tella me move on." Policeman: "What for?" Fruit Vendor: "Dat make big crowd and I sella banana."

## DEFECTIVE SIGHT

Many people suffer from bad sight, or films and specks. All such should send to STEPHEN GREEN, 710, Lambeth Road, London, for his little book, "How to Preserve the Eyesight." This tells of SINGLETON'S EYE OINTMENT, a cure for all troubles of the eyes, eyelids, and eyelashes, having 300 years' reputation as the best remedy. Supplied in ancient pedestal pots for 2/- each by all chemists & stores. Please note that it retains its healing virtues for years.

EXQUISITE MODELS. PERFECT FIT. GUARANTEED WEAR.

## THE Y & N DIAGONAL SEAM CORSETS.

Will not split in the Seams nor tear in the Fabrics. Made in White, Black, and all the Fashionable Colours and Shades in Italian Cloth, Satin, and Coutil 4/11, 5/11, 6/11, 7/11 per pair and upwards.

THREE GOLD MEDALS. "The best make of Corset is the Y & N."—GENTLE WOMAN.

CAUTION. See that the Registered Trade Mark.

"Y & N DIAGONAL SEAM,"

Is imprinted on every Corset and box. No others are Genuine. Sold by Drapers and Ladies' Outfitters throughout the United Kingdom and Colonies.



## Helpful Talks.

BY THE EDITOR.

The Editor is pleased to hear from his readers at any time.

All letters must give the name and address of the writers, not for publication, but as a guarantee of good faith.

**The 2,000th Number.**—It is with the greatest pleasure that I place before my readers the 2,000th No. of the LONDON READER, feeling sure that they will appreciate my efforts to give them such a splendid pennyworth of wholesome and interesting reading, as a memento of so important an occasion. 2,000 weeks is a long time to look back upon, and I am afraid there are few persons, reading the LONDON READER to-day, who were numbered among its first subscribers in 1864. If there are any such, I should be glad to hear from them.

The LONDON READER was among the pioneers of cheap literature, and many of the best authors have contributed stories to its columns, and these have been illustrated by well-known artists, until to-day, the seventy odd volumes contain such a wealth of reading that would suffice to occupy the lifetime of most men and women.

The serial story which begins in this number is one that will make a host of friends, and I am sure that succeeding instalments will be eagerly looked for. "Without a Reference" is by an author with a splendid reputation, and whose stories are eagerly read, not only in our pages, but wherever they are published throughout the English-speaking world.

I also wish to call the attention of readers to another serial story which commences next week. It is entitled "Woman Against Woman," and by that popular writer, Effie Adelaide Rowlands. Full particulars are given in another column.

**A HIGHLAND LAD.**—Mignonette signifies "your qualities surpass your charms;" the yellow tulip means hopeless love.

**ELSIE.**—It is much cheaper and more satisfactory to send straw hats to the dyers than to attempt doing them at home.

**CORPORAL.**—Soldiers can only marry with leave. A certain number of married men are allowed to each regiment, and the permission to take a wife depends greatly on the conduct of the soldier himself.

London  
Reader

SPOT COUPON.

August 31st, 1901.

**DOLLY.**—There is no rule or custom which requires a man who receives and refuses an offer of marriage during leap year, to give the rejected party a silk dress. Such a custom as that would be contrary to the best interests of society, inasmuch as it would be an encouragement for bold and ill-mannered women to overstep the bounds of modesty and decorum by making mercenary offers of marriage to gentlemen during leap year.

**VAIN TOUR.**—The young man, according to your description of him, seems to be weakened by vanity, and also to lack tact and common sense, or he would not boast to you of his social connections in such an offensive way. However, he may be a pretty fair specimen of humanity, notwithstanding his faults, and if you two girls politely snub him with a due mixture of kindness and firmness, he may take the hint and stop his boasting.

**SIR ANTHONY.**—This disposition on the part of your betrothed to find fault is likely to seriously affect the happiness and prosperity of your married life, and you should have a serious talk with her about it. If she does not endeavour to cure herself of this fault, you had better postpone the marriage. If you are sufficiently serious you will be able to show the young lady the great danger of allowing this habit to grow upon her.

**SAUCY KATE.**—1. Unless the gentleman is almost a dwarf you can hardly be so much taller as you say. It certainly does look awkward for a lady to be the taller of the two, but it sometimes happens. 2. No gentleman would do anything so rude and vulgar. A young lady should never use such a word as "larking." We should recommend you to have nothing more to do with the man you speak of. 3. You write legibly, but practice would do your hand a great deal of good.

**IRONSIDE.**—The English soldier who married Oliver Cromwell's eldest daughter, Bridget, was Henry Ireton. He had commenced reading for the law, but the civil war broke out, and he joined the Parliamentary Army. At the battle of Naseby he was taken prisoner, but escaped. Cromwell made him Lord-Deputy of Ireland. He died of the plague, and his body was buried in Westminster Abbey, but on the restoration his remains were exhumed, exposed on a gibbet, and burned by the hangman at Tyburn. He was one of the most active enemies of the king, and signed the death-warrant.

**PERPLEXED LULA.**—(1) You do not seem to know your own mind at present, and I advise your waiting a year or so before becoming engaged. It is only natural that if the young man is in love with you that he should feel jealous of the attention any other young man may pay you. Plainly, it is your duty if you like this particular young man (as you say you do) better than any of the other young men you have met, to confine your attention to him, and to wait and see if your "liking" grows deeper on a longer acquaintance. You want to learn more about the young man than you appear to know at present before committing yourself in any way. (2). An advertisement in the London Morning Post should be the means of obtaining a situation such as you mention.

THE LONDON READER is sent to any part of the world, post free Three-halfpence Weekly; or Quarterly, One Shilling and Eightpence.

ALL LETTERS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR OF THE LONDON READER, 50-52, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts.

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

# EPPS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

# COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

KEATING'S  
POWDER BUGS  
KILLS FLEAS  
BEETLES  
MOSQUITOS

TYPE: 24, 26, & 1-1/2. EACH. FILLING BELLOWS: 9"

"OSCY"  
BEAUTIFIES  
WOMEN



by endowing them with a Magnificent Figure Typical of the True English Beauty so much admired by all. It permanently develops the Bust, Shoulders, Neck, Arms, etc. for which purpose it stands unrivalled. OSCY is applied externally only, is cheap, and lasting in effect.

Testimonials from the highest medical authorities. Dainty booklet and full information sent under cover for stamp to Lady Manager.

OSCY CO., 17, SHAFTERBURY AVENUE LONDON, W.

HAVE YOU GOT A BOX OF  
WHELPTON'S  
PILLS?

IF NOT, WHY NOT?  
THEY CURE

HEADACHE, INDIGESTION, BILE, CONSTIPATION,  
INVALUABLE TO LADIES.

Of all Chemists, Vd., 1s. 1/2d., and 2s. 6d. per box.

G. WHELPTON & SON,  
3 & 4, Crane Court, Fleet Street, London, E.C.  
1151.

THE ORIGINAL KEARSLEY'S 100 YEARS REPUTATION  
WIDOW WEICH'S  
FEMALE PILLS

Awarded Certificate of Merit for the cure of Irregularities, Anemia, and all Female Complaints. They have the approval of the Medical Profession. Beware of Imitations. The only genuine and original are in White Paper Wrappers. Boxes, 1s. 1/2d. and 2s. 6d. of all Chemists. 2s. 6d. box contains three times the pills. Or by post, or 24 stamps, by the makers, C. and G. KEARSLEY, 17, North Street, Westminster. Sold in the Colonies.

TOWLE'S PENNYROYL PILLS  
FOR FEMALES

QUICKLY CORRECT ALL DYSREGULARITIES, REMOVES ALL OBSTRUCTIONS, and relieves the distressing symptoms so prevalent with the sex. Boxes, 1/2d. & 2/6 (contains three times the quantity), of all Chemists. Send anywhere on receipt of 15 or 24 stamps, by R. T. TOWLE & Co., Manufacturers, Dryden St., Nottingham.

Beware of Imitations, Inferior and Spurious.





# BIRD'S GUSTARD POWDER



NO EGGS! NO RISK! NO TROUBLE!

26 88 190  
MUSEUM



# THE LONDON READER

of Literature Science, Art, and General Information.

PART 489. VOL. LXXVII.—NOVEMBER, 1901.

## CONTENTS.

### NOVELETTES.

	PAGE.
A BILL'S MISTAKE .....	553
LADY SYLVIA'S LOVE STORY .....	505
TRUE TO HER TROTH .....	520
UNDER FALSE PRETENCES .....	577

### SERIAL STORIES.

WITHOUT A REFERENCE .....	516, 540, 562, 588
WOMAN AGAINST WOMAN .....	521, 546, 567, 592

### VARIETIES.

	PAGE.
POETRY .....	515, 545, 561, 597
FACTS .....	520, 551, 561, 587
SOCIETY .....	515, 538, 573, 598
STATISTICS .....	525, 550, 575, 597
GEMS .....	525, 550, 575, 597
HELPFUL TALKS .....	527, 552, 575, 600
GLEANINGS .....	526, 539, 574, 599

The December part will contain four long complete Novels and the continuation of our Two Brilliant Serial Stories  
"WITHOUT A REFERENCE," and "WOMAN AGAINST WOMAN."

PRICE SIXPENCE

LONDON.

PUBLISHED AT THE OFFICE, 50-52, LUDGATE HILL, E.C.

AND OF ALL BOOKSELLERS.